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THE LIFE AND TIMES
OF
GENERAL WASHINGTON.

BY
CYRUS R. EDMONDS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR THOMAS TEGG AND SON,
73, CHEAPSIDE.

MDCCCXXXV.

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OF
GENERAL WASHINGTON.

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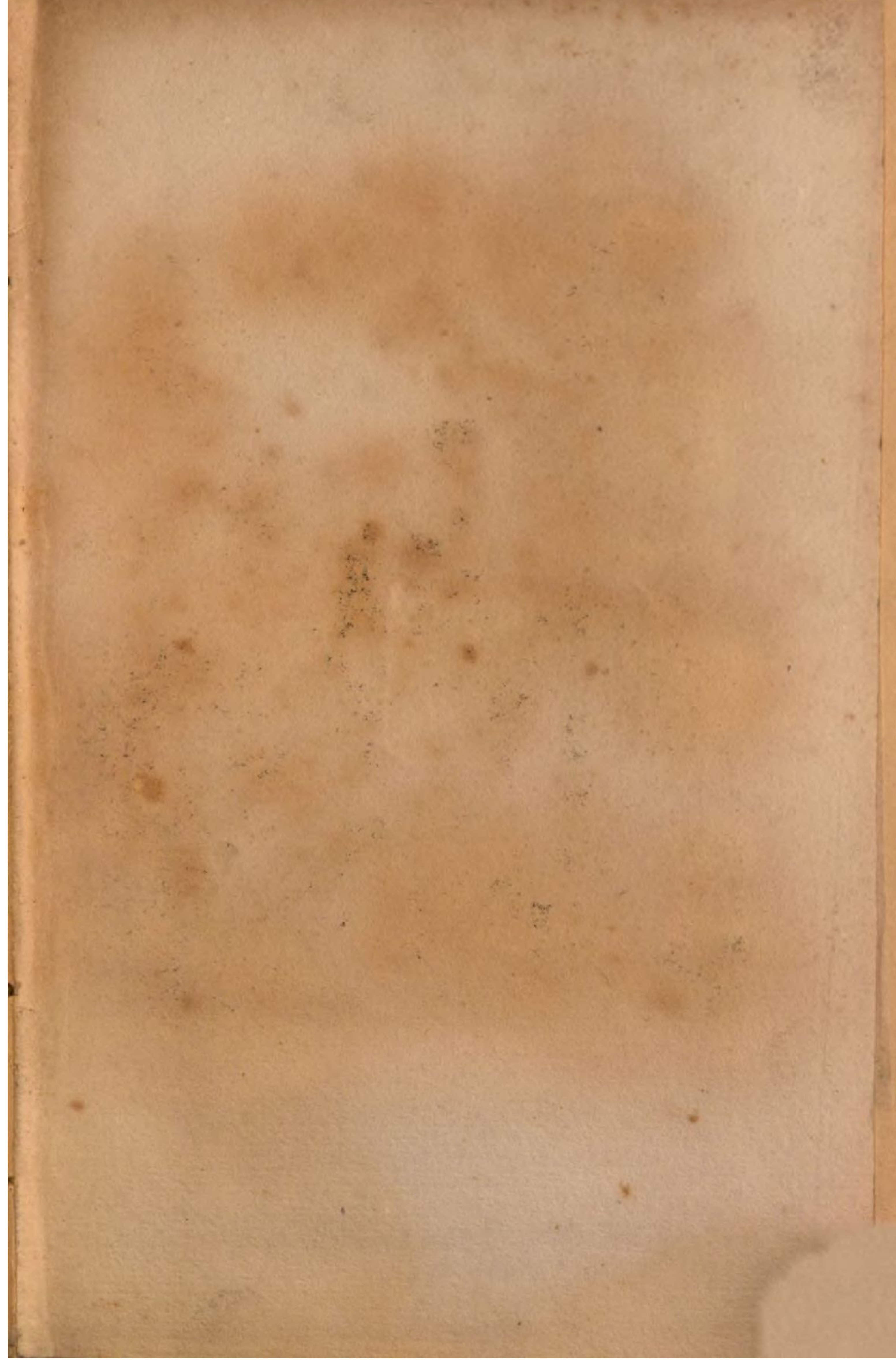
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LIFE AND TIMES

GENERAL WASHINGTON

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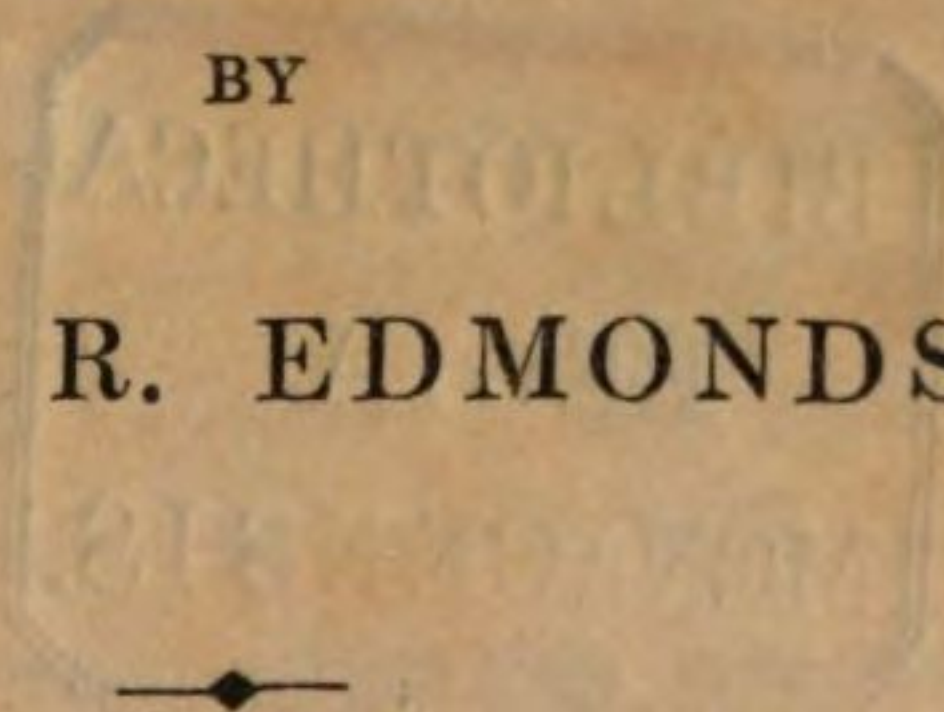
WASHINGTON'S TRIUMPHAL JOURNEY
TO THE CAPITAL.

London: Published by Thomas Tegg & Son, Cheapside 1st Sept^r 1835.



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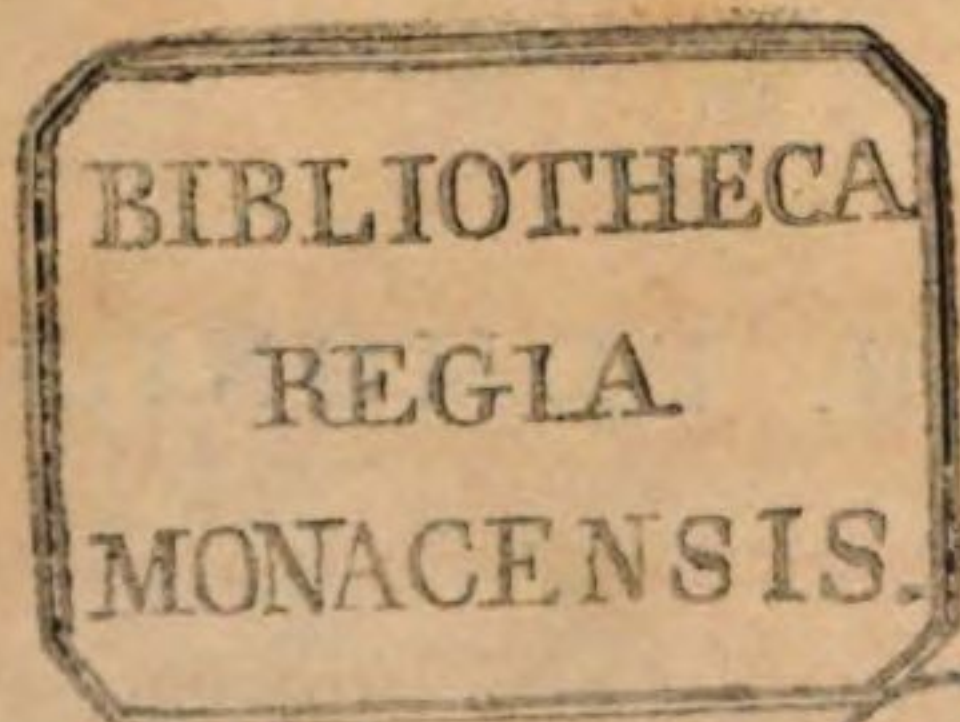


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PREFACE.

THE following work pretends to no higher character than that of a compilation. It is chiefly a narrative of events which have been largely treated of ever since the period of their occurrence, but which, alike from their recentness and their importance, retain a powerful hold upon the public mind, while their results not only reach to the present times, but will affect the interests of distant generations.

With the history of the æra of American Independence, the biography of General Washington is almost identified. It is justly remarked of those who have occupied a position similar to his, that that were made by their times ; but it is particularly true of the character of Washington that it was the perfect index of the spirit of his age. Hence, an accurate narrative of his life combines the interest of biography with the advantages of history.

It must be confessed that the public and poli-

tical character of Washington's life has led his biographers into one capital error. They have been Americans; and, with perhaps a pardonable nationality, they have confined their narration to those parts of his history which, as connected with the political events of the times, reflect the greatest glory upon the American people. They seem to have almost studiously avoided those notices of his private life which, though essential to the interest of biography, would divert the attention from the cause to which their hero was devoted. The same spirit has induced them, in developing the great principles of the American Revolution, to limit their attention to the progress of opinion in America, and to pass over in comparative silence the transactions of the British Senate, which was in fact the great arena of the political conflict.

It has been a primary object with the writer of the following pages to supply these deficiencies. For the private history and correspondence of Washington, he has had recourse to all accessible and authentic sources; and in developing the causes which led to the American Revolution, he has endeavoured to delineate with impartiality the political movements both of the Colonies and the parent State.

Still, however, the reader of these volumes must not expect to be brought into intimate and

social acquaintance with Washington. He was a man of whom it may almost be said that he had no private history. The greater part of his life was spent in the camp and the senate; and of the remainder, the larger proportion was devoted to the affairs of domestic business; so that but little was left for that kind of intercourse, the detail of which supplies the chief zest to biography, by affording the clearest insight into individual character.

Under these disadvantages every biographer of General Washington must labour. The author of these volumes is conscious of many more; and while he professes impartiality, he is fully convinced that he has failed to do justice to one of the greatest and best of mankind.

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THE

LIFE OF WASHINGTON.

THERE is one grand incident in our own annals presenting the means of producing a work at least as interesting and instructive as any public story, ancient or modern. You know that I mean the establishment of American independence. Do I say too much in speaking of this as the principal event in all civil history !

Only think of the magnitude and the nature of the question at issue ; of its consequence, as an example ; of the successful termination of the struggle ; of the elevated and accomplished actors, both in the United States and in England. The battle was as much fought at home as abroad ; and some of the combatants were the King, Lord Chatham, Lord North, Mr. Burke, Mr. Fox, General Washington, Dr. Franklin, and Mr. Jefferson. Think, too, of the Manifestoes, the Proclamations, the Declarations of Independence, and “ last not least,” of the Speeches, which would furnish abler and more authentic examples of eloquence than are to be found in Thucydides, Livy, or Tacitus. These dramatic documents have always been the allowed and admired ornaments of history.—*Sharp's Letters and Essays. Letter to Sir James Mackintosh.*

D^r Sir,

New Windsor Jan 7th 29th 1781

I could have wished, as General Howe is about to make his journey (in consequence of leave formerly granted him) that you could have remained at the post till his, or General Patterson's return - but as this seems inconvenient, from a pressure of family matters, I yield my consent to your immediate departure thence, provided Gen^l Heath sees no particular inconvenience resulting from it at this time

I am D^r Sir

Y^r most Obed^t Serv^t

Brig Gen^l Glover C^t Waples

THE LIFE OF WASHINGTON.

CHAPTER I.

Peculiarities affecting the History of America—Outlines of its early Political Condition—Birth of Washington—Early Character and Habits—Voyage to Barbadoes—Enters the Army—French Invasion from Canada—Washington proceeds as Ambassador to the French General—Appointed Lieutenant-Colonel of the Virginian Troops—Surprise and Death of Jumonville.

THE history of America offers to the contemplation of the historical student one of the most complete and satisfactory experiments which has ever been made upon man in his social and political relations. It differs from most other histories in the certainty which attaches to its earlier portions; for while the primary notices of other nations are either lost in remote antiquity, or are useless as historical remains from the admixture which they contain of legend and superstition, those of the American colonies, falling within the era of authentic history, are genuine and available records.

There is also another consideration which, in the esteem of the philosophical inquirer, attaches

peculiar interest to American history. All the important events and changes with which it is replete, are traceable to the political and social institutions of the country, and not to any distinctive and general character belonging to the people. No society can be imagined more varied than that which colonised the New World. Its first discovery by Columbus in 1492, had impressed a new impulse upon Europe which was propagated through all classes of the people. To some its undiscovered regions offered a theatre for their ambition; to others a field for their curiosity; many were allured to its coasts by mercantile enterprise, while to many it became a refuge from justice, and to not a few the asylum of persecuted piety. Amidst a society so motley, characterised by so little affinity and cohesion, and in no degree modified by the character of the savages whom they displaced, it would be vain to expect anything like a marked national character, or any such rooted and extensively prevalent habits and prejudices as would interfere with the free operation of their social institutions. These institutions, therefore, may be considered to have had a singularly fair trial; a trial made under a most rare and auspicious conjuncture of circumstances; and the more modern and eventful pages of American history, in particular, may be regarded as detailing a series of decisive experiments, establishing certain great principles of political science.

From the earliest period of the settlement of English colonists in America, though each colony had its own separate constitution, yet a general love of freedom pervaded them all. The fundamental principles of the British constitution were

recognised invariably ; and might be continually observed modifying the regulations to which local and particular circumstances successively gave rise. At the same time their institutions were necessarily free from those drawbacks which long usage and gradually decreasing adaptation to the circumstances of the people had occasioned in the mother-country. Thus while the representative system prevailed as the basis of all equitable legislation, and all commercial prosperity, there was not throughout the colonies a single proprietor of a borough ; nor were there any opportunities for corruption, oppression or subserviency, except such as might arise of necessity from the vices of individuals.

The relation in which the American colonies stood to England was of a very general, simple, and intelligible kind. Their internal affairs were regulated by their representatives in assembly ; but their external commerce, in consideration of the protection of the mother country, was confined to her and subject to the regulations of the British Parliament. The limits indeed, which bounded the claims on the one side, and the obligations on the other, were but negligently defined ; with one exception, namely, that which respected the right of internal taxation. This the colonists claimed to themselves as inalienable ; and ever maintained as one of the vital principles of the British constitution, and as essential to freedom, that no assembly could of right impose taxes in which the persons taxed were not adequately represented.

In these general relations to Britain, the American colonies had advanced to such a degree of power as to sustain, in the middle of the eighteenth century, a severe and successful struggle with their

French neighbours, then in possession of Canada ; and the capture of Louisbourg, in the early part of that war, was one of the most brilliant successes which had hitherto crowned the American arms. To the particulars of this war it is unnecessary to refer further than as they first elicited the energies of that illustrious man who was destined to lead his countrymen to victory and independence.

GEORGE WASHINGTON was the eldest son of Augustine Washington, by his second wife, Mary Ball. His father was first married to Jane Butler, by whom he had three sons and a daughter ; and, by his second marriage, had four sons and two daughters. This gentleman was the great grandson of Mr. John Washington, a man of considerable wealth and influence in the north of England, who emigrated to America about the year 1657, and settled at Bridges Creek, in the County of Westmoreland, Virginia ; where George Washington was born, on the 22nd of February, 1732. Of his early boyhood few authentic notices have been preserved. Such as do exist, evince a sobriety of mind, and closeness of observation, rarely found at so tender an age. These, however, were combined with a degree of energy and hardihood which eminently fitted him for those unexampled labours by which, in after life, he laid the solid foundations of his country's freedom.

The earliest papers of Washington, which were found at his residence, Mount Vernon, after his decease, were chiefly his school exercises in arithmetic and geometry, and are only remarkable for their order and accuracy. To the latter of these pursuits he seems to have been much attached ; and some manuscripts are still in existence which not

only indicate the bent of his taste to abstract mathematics, but also to practical mensuration; detailing the little events of some of his boyish expeditions as a surveyor of lands. Among these early productions of his pen the most remarkable is, a series of maxims, under the title of "*Rules of Civility and decent Behaviour in Company and Conversation.*" These are very much in the style of Dr. Franklin, and many of them are strikingly characteristic of the more matured mental habits of the writer. At a very early age the spirit of martial enterprise seems to have been infused into his mind by the political circumstances of his country. He lost his father at the age of ten years; and being thus consigned to the sole care of an affectionate and solicitous mother, his plan of going to sea, which was entertained at the age of fourteen, was strongly opposed by her, and eventually abandoned.

At the age of sixteen we find Mr. Washington engaged in business as a practical surveyor, and in this capacity making a tour among the Alleghany Mountains; the hardships and privations of which are described in a journal written by him at the time. In the same volume which contains this rough diary, are found the drafts of some letters written during the tour, two extracts from which may not be uninteresting. The first has reference solely to his adventures, and is as follows:—

"DEAR RICHARD,

"THE receipt of your kind favour of the 2nd instant, afforded me unspeakable pleasure, as it convinces me that I am still in the memory of so worthy a friend:—a friendship I shall be proud of

increasing. Yours gave me the more pleasure as I received it among barbarians and an uncouth set of people. Since you received my letter of October last I have not slept above three or four nights in a bed ; but, after walking a good deal all the day, I have lain down before the fire upon a little hay, straw, fodder, or a bear skin, whichever was to be had ; with man, wife, and children, like dogs and cats ; and happy is he who gets the berth nearest the fire. Nothing would make it pass off tolerably but a good reward. A doubloon is my constant gain every day that the weather will permit of my going out ; and sometimes six pistoles. The coldness of the weather will not allow of my making a long stay, as the lodging is rather too cold for the time of year. I have never had my clothes off, but have lain and slept in them, except the few nights I have been in Frederictown."

The second extract is chiefly interesting as containing an allusion to an early attachment, of which nothing more is known than can be gleaned from this, and two or three similar references, incidentally made about this time. It is as follows :—

"DEAR FRIEND ROBIN,

"As it is the greatest mark of friendship and esteem which absent friends can show each other to write, and often communicate their thoughts, I shall endeavour from time to time, and at all times, to acquaint you with my situation and employments in life ; and I could wish you would take half the pains to send me a letter by any opportunity, as you may be well assured of its meeting with a very welcome reception,

“ My place of residence at present is at his lordship’s (Lord Fairfax’s) where I might, were I disengaged, pass my time very pleasantly ; as there is a very agreeable young lady in the house, Colonel George Fairfax’s wife’s sister. But that only adds fuel to the fire, as being often, and unavoidably in her company, revives my former passion for your Lowland beauty ; whereas, were I to live more retired from young women, I might in some measure alleviate my sorrow, by burying that chaste and troublesome passion in oblivion ; and I am very well assured that this will be the only antidote or remedy.”

In 1751, Mr. Washington made a voyage to Barbadoes, for the sake of accompanying his elder brother, Lawrence ; who was driven to that warmer climate by an attack of pulmonary disease, which terminated his life within twelve months of his departure. From the brief and interrupted diary which has been preserved in George’s hand writing, this temporary change of scene and residence appears to have tended to open his mind, and more especially to have promoted those military propensities which were shortly to be more perfectly developed.

After a tempestuous voyage from Barbadoes, Mr. Washington arrived in Virginia, in February, 1752 ; and but a few months afterwards witnessed the death of his brother Lawrence. He died at his own estate, called Mount Vernon ; which thenceforth became the property of George, and so remained to the close of his life.

It has been adduced as evidence of the high opinion entertained of George Washington’s early stabi-

lity of character, that at the age of nineteen he was honoured with an appointment as one of the adjutants-general of Virginia, with the rank of major. On the accession of Mr. Dinwiddie as governor of that colony, it was divided into four military districts, to each of which an adjutant was assigned; and in this capacity Mr. Washington's appointment was renewed, in November 1753.

Immediately upon this arrangement occurred those important events which at once introduced him to military and political life. Intelligence had been received, from time to time, that the French were encroaching upon certain territories beyond the Alleghany Mountains, which were considered as belonging to the Colony of Virginia; and, consequently, to the British crown. Inquiry was immediately set on foot, whence it was ascertained that a French army was approaching from Canada, with a view to establish a chain of fortifications from the Lakes to the River Ohio, to take possession of the territory in the name of the French king, and to unite the extensive dominions of France in America by connecting Canada with Louisiana. On the development of this scheme, Governor Dinwiddie resolved upon prompt measures for the enforcement of the claims of the British government; and, as a preparatory step, determined to send a commissioner to the French officer, who should be authorised to ascertain his designs; and directed to obtain all possible information respecting the force, progress, and plans of the invading army. This delicate and responsible trust was confided by the governor to Major Washington. He was recommended to it at once by the maturity of his judgment, the energy

and decision of his mind, and his knowledge of the character of the Indians, through whose settlements his journey must lie; and of the modes of living and travelling in the woods, to which he had been habituated in his surveying expeditions.

With characteristic promptness Major Washington commenced his journey on the very day on which he received his commission; and from a journal * which he kept throughout the period of his absence, appears to have experienced a degree of hardship, and to have discovered that kind of tact in conducting treaties with the Indian tribes, which at once pointed him out and fitted him for the more momentous duties upon which he was destined shortly to enter.

Having held his interview with the French commandant, and received a definitive reply, he immediately returned to Williamsburgh to report the result of the expedition. The reply indicated no disposition on the part of the French to withdraw their forces or relax their claims; Governor Dinwiddie was therefore authorised by the assembly of Virginia to raise a regiment, consisting of 300 soldiers, to maintain the rights of the British crown; and ten thousand pounds were voted to support them in an expedition to the Ohio for this purpose. The command of this body was conferred upon Colonel Joshua Fry, and Major Washington was raised to the rank of lieutenant-colonel, and made second in command.

Impatient for active service he obtained permission to march with two companies, in advance of the other troops, to a place called the Great

* This Journal is in many respects highly characteristic of the writer; but is too long for insertion here.

Meadows ; in order to protect the country, and to obtain further information of the movements of the enemy. On his arrival he was informed by some friendly Indians, that the French had driven before them a party of workmen who had been employed by the Ohio Company in erecting a fort on the south-eastern branch of that river ; and that they were themselves engaged in prosecuting the main object of their invasion by completing a fortification at the junction of the Alleghany and Monongahela rivers ;—a spot which was visited by Washington in his mission to the French force, and mentioned by him as particularly favourable for such a purpose. In consequence of this intelligence, he started with his small force in the middle of a dark and rainy night, under the guidance of some Indians ; and after a march of a few miles surprised the encampment of the French. “ A disposition for attack was immediately formed, in which the English occupied the right wing and the Indian party the left. In this manner they advanced, till they came so near as to be discovered by the French, who instantly ran to their arms. Washington then ordered his men to fire, and a skirmish ensued. The firing continued on both sides about fifteen minutes, till the French were defeated with the loss of their whole party ; ten men being killed, including their commander, M. de Jumonville ; one wounded, and twenty-one taken prisoners. Colonel Washington’s loss was one man killed and two or three wounded. The Indians escaped without injury, as the firing of the French was directed chiefly against the right wing, where Washington and his men were stationed.”

The foregoing brief narrative of this first engage-

ment, is given in the words of Mr. Jared Sparks, in the appendix to his second volume of "The Writings of George Washington, &c." And is composed upon a careful comparison of his despatches, private journal, and other documents. This scrupulous caution has been rendered necessary by the fact, that out of this trifling skirmish a calumny has arisen and received extensive credit, deeply affecting the character of Washington;—no less a charge than that of having sanctioned the assassination of M. de Jumonville. This report was, as might naturally be expected, supported solely by the testimony of French historians; and by a cautious investigation of their narrative, the whole may be traced to a letter of M. de Contrecoeur, the Commander of the French forces employed in this expedition, to the Marquess Duquesne, at that time Governor of Canada. The passage in question is as follows:—

June 2, 1754.

* * * *

"Since the letter which I had the honour to write to you on the 30th ultimo, in which I informed you, that I expected the return of M. de Jumonville in four days, it has been reported by the savages that his party has been taken and eight men killed, among whom is M. de Jumonville. A Canadian belonging to the party, named Monceau, made his escape; who relates, that they had built cabins in a low bottom, where they lay during a heavy rain. At seven o'clock in the morning, they saw themselves encircled on one side by the English, and by savages on the other. Two discharges of musketry were fired upon them by the English, but none by

the savages. M. de Jumonville called upon them by an interpreter to desist, as he had something to say to them. The firing ceased. M. de Jumonville caused the summons to be read which I had sent, admonishing them to retire; a copy of which I had the honour to enclose. Whilst this was reading, the said Monceau saw the French gathered close round M. de Jumonville in the midst of the English and the savages. At that time Monceau escaped through the woods, making his way hither, partly by land and partly in a small canoe on the river Monongahela.

“This, Sir, is all that I have been able to learn from Monceau. The misfortune is that our people were taken by surprise. The English had surrounded and come upon them before they were seen.

“I have this moment received a letter from M. de Chauvignerie, which I have the honour to send you herewith, from which you will see that we have certainly lost eight men, of whom M. de Jumonville is one. The savages who were present, say that M. de Jumonville was killed by a musket shot in the head, while he was listening to the reading of the summons; and that the English would have immediately destroyed the whole party, had not the savages rushed in before them and prevented their attempt.”

The above letter of M. de Contrecoeur, is the sole datum upon which various French historians have founded the charge of treacherous assassination against Washington. Its language was copied almost *verbatim* by several authors, and the circumstances which it details obtained very general

credence upon the Continent. These impressions were still further deepened by the publication of an epic poem from the pen of M. Thomas, which appeared five years after. It was entitled "*Jumonville*;" and detailed the reported occurrences to which reference has been made, with all the tasteless and almost ludicrous exaggeration which distinguishes this department of French literature. To dissipate these impressions, it is only necessary to examine for one moment the foundation upon which these historical fallacies, and tragic horrors were built. "By what testimony," says Mr. Sparks, "is this statement of M. de Contrecoeur sustained? First by the report of a Canadian, who fled affrighted at the beginning of the action; and, next, by the vague rumours of the savages, who were said to have been on the spot. These savages, if any there were who returned to M. de Contrecoeur, must have come out with the French party. No such savages are mentioned as being seen by the English; and consequently, if there were any originally with the party, they escaped, like the Canadian, at the beginning of the action, and could have had no knowledge of the manner in which it was conducted. In any other case would such testimony be taken as evidence of the facts?"

Thus unsubstantial are the evidences adducible in support of this serious charge. It is truly to the immortal honour of Washington, that this vague and floating rumour is the only one that ever threatened to cloud the lustre of his fame. It arose from dubious and inconsistent testimony, was only entertained by the remote, the ignorant, and the prejudiced, and rolls away before the first light of free and impartial inquiry.

CHAPTER II.

Washington succeeds to the Command of the Virginian Troops reinforced by some Government Forces—Jealousy of the Regulars—They march to dislodge the French from Fort Duquesne—Are met by a superior Force—Battle of the Great Meadows—Capitulation of Washington—Serious Mistake arising from the Treachery of the Interpreter—Vote of Thanks from the Virginian House of Burgesses.

THE remainder of the Virginian forces, before whom Washington had advanced with his inconsiderable troop, were now hastening to join him, and this junction was effected at the Great Meadows. Meanwhile Colonel Fry had died on the march, and the command devolved upon Colonel Washington. Soon after these events the forces under his command were joined by two independent companies of Government troops, the one from South Carolina, and the other from New York, making in the whole somewhat less than four hundred effective men. Within this very inadequate force, a dispute arose upon a point of precedence, which threatened their entire disorganisation. The regular officers, infected with a spirit which became in after years so conspicuous in the conduct of Great Britain, refused to serve under a provincial commander, and nothing but a sense of weakness and danger, induced them to waive for a time this unworthy jealousy. Even after Colonel Washington had assumed an undisputed command, the conduct

of the regulars, as will be seen, was well calculated to impress upon the colonists, that their interests were only secure under their own protection and defence.

After erecting a small fort called Fort Necessity, at the Great Meadows, they commenced their march against Fort Duquesne, with the hope of dislodging the French. They had not proceeded far, when they were informed of the rapid approach of a force of French and Indians greatly superior to their own. Upon the corroboration of this rumour by some deserters, a council of war was held, in which the officers decided to retire to the Great Meadows, and preparations for a retreat commenced immediately. The events which immediately succeeded, are thus detailed by Mr. Sparks, in his recent work to which allusion has already been made *.

“It was not the intention of Colonel Washington at first to halt at this place, but his men had become so much fatigued from great labour, and a deficiency of provisions, that they could draw the swivels no further, nor carry the baggage on their backs. They had been eight days without bread, and at the Great Meadows they found only a few bags of flour. It was thought advisable to wait here, therefore, and fortify themselves in the best manner they could, till they should receive supplies and reinforcements. They had heard of the arrival at Alexandria of two Independent Companies from New York twenty days before, and it was presumed they must by this time have reached Will’s Creek. An express was sent to hasten them on, with as much despatch as possible.

* Appendix, vol. ii. p. 456, &c.

“ Meantime Colonel Washington set his men to felling trees, and carrying logs to the fort, with a view to raise a breastwork, and enlarge and strengthen the fortification in the best manner that circumstances would permit. The space of ground, called the Great Meadows, is a level bottom, through which passes a small creek, and is surrounded by hills of a moderate and gradual ascent. This bottom, or glade, is entirely level, covered with long grass and small bushes, and varies in width. At the point where the fort stood, it is about two hundred and fifty yards wide, from the base of one hill to that of the opposite. The position of the fort was well chosen, being about one hundred yards from the upland, or wooded ground, on the one side, and one hundred and fifty on the other, and so situated on the margin of the creek, as to afford an easy access by water. At one point the high ground comes within sixty yards of the fort, and this was the nearest distance to which an enemy could approach under the shelter of the trees. The outlines of the fort were still visible, when the spot was visited by the writer in 1830, occupying an irregular square, the dimensions of which were about one hundred feet on each side. One of the angles was prolonged further than the others, for the purpose of reaching the water in the creek. On the west side, next to the nearest wood, were three entrances, protected by short breastworks, or bastions. The remains of a ditch, stretching round the south and west sides, were also distinctly seen. The site of this fort, named *Fort Necessity*, from the circumstances attending its erection and original use, is three or four hundred yards south of what is now called the National Road, four miles from

the foot of Laurel Hill, and fifty miles from Cumberland at Will's Creek.

“ On the 3rd of July, early in the morning, an alarm was received from a sentinel, who had been wounded by the enemy ; and at nine o'clock intelligence came, that the whole body of the enemy, amounting, as was reported, to nine hundred men, was only four miles off. At eleven o'clock they approached the fort, and began to fire, at the distance of six hundred yards, but without effect. Colonel Washington had drawn up his men on the open and level ground outside the trenches, waiting for the attack, which he presumed would be made as soon as the enemy's forces emerged from the woods ; and he ordered his men to reserve their fire, till they should be near enough to do execution. The distant firing was supposed to be a stratagem to draw Washington's men into the woods, and thus to take them at a disadvantage. He suspected the design, and maintained his post till he found the French did not incline to leave the woods, and attack the fort by an assault, as he supposed they would, considering their superiority of numbers. He then drew his men back within the trenches, and gave them orders to fire according to their discretion, as suitable opportunities might present themselves. The French and Indians remained on the side of the rising ground, which was nearest to the fort, and, sheltered by the trees, kept up a brisk fire of musketry, but never appeared in the open plain below. The rain fell heavily through the day, the trenches were filled with water, and many of the arms of Colonel Washington's men were out of order, and used with difficulty.

“ In this way the battle continued from eleven

o'clock in the morning till eight at night, when the French called and requested a parley. Suspecting this to be a feint to procure the admission of an officer into the fort, that he might discover their condition, Colonel Washington at first declined listening to the proposal, but when the call was repeated, with the additional request that an officer might be sent to them, engaging at the same time their parole for his safety, he sent out Captain Vanbraam, the only person under his command, that could speak French, except the Chevalier de Peyrouny, an ensign in the Virginia regiment, who was dangerously wounded, and disabled from rendering any service on this occasion. Vanbraam returned, and brought with him from M. de Villiers, the French commander, proposed articles of capitulation. These he read and pretended to interpret, and, some changes having been made by mutual agreement, both parties signed them about midnight.

“By the terms of the capitulation, the whole garrison was to retire, and return without molestation to the inhabited parts of the country, and the French commander promised that no embarrassment should be interposed, either by his own men or the savages. The English were to take away every thing in their possession, except their artillery, and to march out of the fort the next morning with the honours of war, their drums beating and colours flying. As the French had killed all the horses and cattle, Colonel Washington had no means of transporting his heavy baggage and stores; and it was conceded to him, that his men might conceal their effects, and that a guard might be left to protect them, till horses could be sent up

to take them away. Colonel Washington agreed to restore the prisoners who had been taken at the skirmish with Jumonville ; and as a surety for this article two hostages, Captain Vanbraam and Captain Stobo, were delivered up to the French, and were to be retained till the prisoners should return. It was moreover agreed, that the party capitulating should not attempt to build any more establishments at that place, or beyond the mountains, for the space of a year.

“ Early the next morning Colonel Washington began to march from the fort in good order, but he had proceeded only a short distance, when a body of one hundred Indians, being a reinforcement to the French, came upon him, and could hardly be restrained from attacking his men. They pilfered the baggage and did other mischief. He marched forward, however, with as much speed as possible, in the weakened and encumbered condition of his army, there being no other mode of conveying the wounded men and the baggage, than on the soldiers’ backs. As the provisions were nearly exhausted, no time was to be lost ; and, leaving much of the baggage behind, he hastened to Will’s Creek, where all the necessary supplies were in store. Thence Colonel Washington and Captain Mackay proceeded to Williamsburg, and communicated in person to the Governor the events of the campaign.

“ A good deal of dissatisfaction was expressed with some of the articles of capitulation, when they came to be made public. The truth is, Colonel Washington had been grossly deceived by the interpreter, either through ignorance or design. An officer of his regiment, who was present at the reading and signing of the articles, wrote as follows

on this point, five weeks afterwards, in a letter to a friend.

“ ‘ When Mr. Vanbraam returned with the French proposals, we were obliged to take the sense of them from his mouth ; it rained so hard, that he could not give us a written translation of them ; we could scarcely keep the candle lighted to read them by ; and every officer there is ready to declare, that there was no such word as *assassination* mentioned. The terms expressed were, *the death of Jumonville*. If it had been mentioned, we would by all means have had it altered, as the French, during the course of the interview, seemed very condescending, and desirous to bring things to a conclusion ; and, upon our insisting, altered the articles relating to stores and ammunition, which they wanted to detain ; and that of the cannon, which they agreed to have *destroyed*, instead of *reserved for their use*.

“ ‘ Another article, which appears to our disadvantage, is that whereby we oblige ourselves not to attempt an establishment beyond the mountains. This was translated to us, *not to attempt buildings or improvements on the lands of his Most Christian Majesty*. This we never intended, as we denied he had any there, and therefore thought it needless to dispute the point.

“ ‘ The last article, which relates to the hostages, is quite different from the translation of it given to us. It is mentioned *for the security of the performance of this treaty*, as well as for the return of the prisoners. There was never such an intention on our side, or mention of it made on theirs by our interpreter. Thus, by the evil intention or negligence of Vanbraam, our conduct is scrutinised

by a busy world, fond of criticising the proceedings of others, without considering circumstances, or giving just attention to reasons, which might be offered to obviate their censures.'

"Vanbraam was a Dutchman, and had but an imperfect knowledge of either the French or English language. How far his ignorance should be taken as an apology for his blunders is uncertain. Although he had approved himself a good officer, yet there were other circumstances, which brought his fidelity in question. Governor Dinwiddie, in giving an account of this affair to Lord Albemarle, says, 'In the capitulation they made use of the word *assassination*, but Washington, not knowing French, was deceived by the interpreter, who was a poltroon, and though an officer with us, they say he has joined the French.' How long Vanbraam was detained as a hostage is not known, but he never returned to Virginia, and it was the general belief, that he practised an intentional deception in his attempts to interpret the articles of capitulation. But whether this be true or not, the consequence was unfortunate, as the articles in their written form implied an acknowledgment of the charge of assassinating Jumonville. The French writers, regarding this as an authentic public document, were confirmed by it in their false impressions derived from M. de Contrecoeur's letter concerning the fate of Jumonville; and thus a grave historical error, inflicting a deep injustice on the character of Washington, has been sanctioned by eminent names, and perpetuated in the belief of the reading portion of the French people.

"M. de Villiers, the commander of the French forces, was the brother of Jumonville. His account

of the march from Fort Duquesne, and the transactions at the Great Meadows, was published by the French government, in connexion with what purported to be extracts from Colonel Washington's journal taken at Braddock's defeat. Many years afterwards, some person sent to Washington a translation of these papers, upon which he made a brief comment, which it is proper to introduce in this place, after inserting an extract from that part of M. de Villiers' narrative, which relates to the affair of the Great Meadows.

“ ‘ As we had no knowledge of the place,’ says M. de Villiers, ‘ we presented our flank to the fort, when they began to fire on us with their cannon. Almost at the same instant that I saw the English on the right coming towards us, the Indians as well as ourselves set up a loud cry, and we advanced upon them ; but they did not give us time to fire before they retreated behind an intrenchment adjoining the fort. We then prepared ourselves to invest the fort. It was advantageously situated in a meadow, and within musket-shot of the wood. We approached as near to them as possible, and not uselessly expose his Majesty's subjects. The fire was spirited on both sides, and I placed myself in the position where it seemed to me most likely a sortie would be attempted. If the expression may be allowed, we almost extinguished the fire of their cannon by our musketry.

“ ‘ About six o'clock in the evening the fire of the enemy increased with renewed vigour, and continued till eight. We returned it briskly. We had taken effectual measures to secure our posts, and keep the enemy in the fort all night ; and, after having put ourselves in the best position possible,

we called out to the English, that, if they desired a parley with us, we would cease firing. They accepted the proposal. A captain came out, and I sent M. de Mercier to receive him, and went to the Meadow myself, where we told him, that, not being at war, we were willing to save them from the cruelties to which they would expose themselves on the part of the savages by an obstinate resistance, that we could take from them all the hope of escape during the night, that we consented nevertheless to show them favour, as we had come only to avenge the assassination, which they had inflicted upon my brother, in violation of the most sacred laws, and to oblige them to depart from the territories of the King. We then agreed to accord to them the capitulation, a copy of which is hereunto annexed.

“ ‘ We considered that nothing could be more advantageous to the nation than this capitulation, as it was unnatural in the time of peace to make prisoners. We made the English consent to sign, that they had assassinated my brother in his camp. We took hostages for the French, who were in their power ; we caused them to abandon the lands belonging to the king ; we obliged them to leave their cannon, which consisted of nine pieces ; we had destroyed all their horses and cattle, and made them sign, that the favour we granted them was only to prove how much we desired to treat them as friends. That very night the articles were signed, and I received in camp the hostages whom I had demanded.

“ ‘ On the 4th, at the dawn of day, I sent a detachment to take possession of the fort. The garrison defiled, and the number of their dead and

wounded excited my pity, in spite of the resentment, which I felt for the manner in which they had taken away the life of my brother.

““ The savages, who in every thing had adhered to my wishes, claimed the right of plunder, but I prevented them. The English, struck with a panic, took to flight, and left their flag and one of their colours. I demolished the fort, and M. de Mercier caused the cannon to be broken, as also the one granted by the capitulation, the English not being able to take it away. I hastened my departure, after having burst open the casks of liquor, to prevent the disorders which would otherwise infallibly have followed. One of my Indians took ten Englishmen, whom he brought to me, and whom I sent back by another.”—*Mémoire contenant le Précis des Faits*, &c. p. 147.

“ Such is the statement of M. de Villiers. The incident, mentioned at the close, of an Indian taking ten Englishmen, is so ludicrous, that it must necessarily cast a shade of doubt over the whole, and cause us to suspect the writer’s accuracy of facts and soundness of judgment, whatever we may think of the fertility of his imagination, and his exuberant self-complacency. Washington’s remarks on this extract were communicated in the following letter to a gentleman, who had previously written to him on the subject.

““ SIR,

““ I am really sorry, that I have it not in my power to answer your request in a more satisfactory manner. If you had favoured me with the journal a few days sooner, I would have examined it carefully, and endeavoured to point out

such errors as might conduce to your use, my advantage, and the public satisfaction; but now it is out of my power.

“ ‘ I had no time to make any remarks upon that piece, which is called my journal. The enclosed are observations on the French notes. They are of no use to me separated, nor will they, I believe, be of any to you; yet I send them unconnected and incoherent as they were taken, for I have no opportunity to correct them.

“ ‘ In regard to the journal, I can only observe in general, that I kept no regular one during that expedition; rough minutes of occurrences I certainly took, and find them as certainly and strangely metamorphosed; some parts left out, which I remember were entered, and many things added that never were thought of; the names of men and things egregiously miscalled; and the whole of what I saw Englished is very incorrect and nonsensical; yet, I will not pretend to say that the little body, who brought it to me, has not made a literal translation, and a good one.

“ ‘ Short as my time is, I cannot help remarking on Villiers’ account of the battle of, and transactions at the Meadows, as it is very extraordinary, and not less erroneous than inconsistent. He says the French received the first fire. It is well known, that we received it at six hundred paces’ distance. He also says, our fears obliged us to retreat in a most disorderly manner after the capitulation. How is this consistent with his other account? He acknowledges, that we sustained the attack warmly from ten in the morning until dark, and that he called first to parley, which strongly indicates that we were not totally absorbed in fear. If the gentle-

man in his account had adhered to the truth, he must have confessed, that we looked upon his offer to parley as an artifice to get into and examine our trenches, and refused on this account, until they desired an officer might be sent to them, and gave their parole for his safe return. He might also, if he had been as great a lover of the truth as he was of vainglory, have said, that we absolutely refused their first and second proposals, and would consent to capitulate on no other terms than such as we obtained. That we were wilfully, or ignorantly, deceived by our interpreter in regard to the word *assassination*, I do aver, and will to my dying moment; so will every officer that was present. The interpreter was a Dutchman, little acquainted with the English tongue, therefore might not advert to the tone and meaning of the word in English; but, whatever his motives were for so doing, certain it is, he called it the *death* or the *loss*, of the Sieur Jumonville. So we received and so we understood it, until, to our great surprise and mortification, we found it otherwise in a literal translation.

“That we left our baggage and horses at the Meadows is certain; that there was not even a possibility to bring them away is equally certain, as we had every horse belonging to the camp killed or taken away during the action; so that it was impracticable to bring any thing off, that our shoulders were not able to bear; and to wait there was impossible, for we had scarce three days' provisions, and were seventy miles from a supply; yet, to say we came off precipitately is absolutely false; notwithstanding they did, contrary to articles, suffer their Indians to pillage our baggage, and commit all kinds of irregularity, we were with them

until ten o'clock the next day ; we destroyed our powder and other stores, nay, even our private baggage, to prevent its falling into their hands, as we could not bring it off. When we had got about a mile from the place of action, we missed two or three of the wounded, and sent a party back to bring them up ; this is the party he speaks of. We brought them all safe off, and encamped within three miles of the Meadows. These are circumstances, I think, that make it evidently clear that we were not very apprehensive of danger. The colours he speaks of as left, were a large flag of immense size and weight ; our regimental colours were brought off, and are now in my possession. Their gasconades, and boasted clemency, must appear in the most ludicrous light to every considerate person, who reads Villiers' journal ; such preparations for an attack, such vigour and intrepidity as he pretends to have conducted his march with, such revenge as by his own account appeared in his attack, considered, it will hardly be thought that compassion was his motive for calling a parley. But to sum up the whole, Mr. Villiers pays himself no great compliment in saying we were struck with a panic when matters were adjusted. We surely could not be afraid without cause, and if we had cause after capitulation, it was a reflection upon himself."

So sensible were the Provincial Government of the claims which Colonel Washington and his companions in arms had upon their gratitude, that immediately on their meeting in August following, they passed a vote of thanks to them "for their bravery and gallant defence of their country." They also expressed to the Governor their appro-

bation of the instructions he had given to the officers and forces sent on the Ohio expedition. In a word, the entire conduct of this campaign gave great and general satisfaction, and inspired in the minds of his countrymen so general an esteem for Colonel Washington's capabilities for military command, as prepared them eventually to commit to his single hands the universal interests of his country, at the most critical moment of her history.

CHAPTER III.

Colonel Washington's Regiment retires to Winchester—Is inadequately recruited—Receives Orders to cross the Alleghany Mountains—Letter of Washington, showing the impossibility of executing this Service—The Plan is abandoned—New Regulations for settling the Rank of Officers—Washington resigns his Commission and retires into private Life.

THE regiment which had accomplished this creditable but unsuccessful campaign, returned to Winchester to be recruited; and having been augmented by some small reinforcements from Maryland and Virginia, were directed by Governor Dinwiddie to march across the Alleghany Mountains, with a primary view of dispossessing the French of their fort (Duquesne); but, at all events, of establishing one for themselves in an eligible position. These directions afford by no means a singular instance of that utter incapacity for the administration of military affairs which distinguished not only this provincial government and council, but in after years appeared in the national congress and paralysed the energies alike of the general and the army. The following letter from Colonel Washington to his early friend, Mr. William Fairfax, sets in a very strong light the almost incredible ignorance and carelessness which, throughout his military career, loaded him with the responsibilities and duties of others:—

“ Alexandria, 11 August, 1754.

“ SIR,

“ SINCE my last to you, I have received, by Mr. Spiltdorph, the letter therein alluded to, the contents of which are nearly the same as in the one received from the Governor four days before. The following is an exact copy of it.

“ ‘ The Council met yesterday, and, considering the present state of our forces, and having reason to think the French will be reinforced next spring, it was resolved, that the forces should immediately march over the Alleghany Mountains, either to dispossess the French of their fort, or build one in a proper place, that may be fixed upon by a council of war. Colonel Innes has my orders for executing the above affair. I am, therefore, now to order you to get your regiment completed to three hundred men, and I have no doubt that you will be able to enlist what you are deficient of your number very soon, and march directly to Will’s Creek to join the other forces ; and, that there may be no delay, I order you to march what companies you have complete, and leave orders with the officers remaining to follow you, as soon as they shall have enlisted men sufficient to make up their companies. You know the season of the year calls for dispatch. I depend upon your former usual diligence and spirit to encourage your people to be active on this occasion. Consult with Major Carlyle as to the ammunition which may be wanted, that I may send it up immediately. I trust much to your diligence and despatch in getting your regiment to Will’s Creek as soon as possible.

“ ‘ Colonel Innes will consult you in the appoint-

ment of officers for your regiment. Pray consider, if practicable, that, to send a party of Indians to destroy the corn at the fort and Logstown would be of great service to us, and a considerable disappointment to the enemy. I can say no more, but to press the despatch of your regiment to Will's Creek.'

" Thus, Sir, you will see I am ordered, with the utmost despatch, to repair to Will's Creek with the regiment; to do which, under the present circumstances, is as impracticable, as it is (as far as I can see into the thing) to dispossess the French of their fort; both of which, with our means, are morally impossible.

" The Governor observes, that, considering the state of our forces at present, it is thought advisable to move out immediately to dispossess the French. Now that very reason, 'the state of our forces,' is alone sufficient against the measure, without a large addition to them. Consider, I pray you, Sir, under what unhappy circumstances the men at present are; and their numbers, compared with those of the enemy, are so inconsiderable, that we should be harassed and driven from place to place at their pleasure. To what end the building of a fort would be, unless we could proceed as far as Red-stone, where we should have to take water, and where the enemy can come with their artillery, I cannot see, unless it be to secure a retreat, which we should have no occasion for, were we to go out in proper force and properly provided, which I aver cannot be done this fall; for, before our force can be collected, with proper stores of provisions, ammunition, and working-tools, the season would approach in which horses cannot travel over the

mountains on account of snows, want of forage, slipperiness of the roads, and high waters. Neither can men, unused to that life, live there, without some other defence from the weather than tents. Of this I am certain from my own knowledge, as I was out last winter from the 1st of November till some time in January; and, notwithstanding I had a good tent, was as properly prepared, and as well guarded, in every respect, as I could be against the weather, yet the cold was so intense, that it was scarcely supportable. I believe, out of the five or six men that went with me, three of them, though they were as well clad as they could be, were rendered useless by the frost, and were obliged to be left upon the road.

“But the impossibility of supporting us with provisions is alone sufficient to discourage the attempt; for, were commissaries with sufficient funds to set about procuring provisions, and getting them out, it is not probable that enough could be conveyed out this fall to support us through the winter; for you are to consider, Sir, as I before observed, that the snows and hard frosts set in very early upon those mountains; and, as they are in many places almost inaccessible at all times, it is then more than horses can do to clamber up them. But, allow that they could, for want of provender they will become weak and die upon the road, as ours did, though we carried corn with us for their use, and purchased from place to place. This reason holds good, also, against driving out livestock, which, if it could be done, would save some thousands of loads for horses, that might be employed in carrying flour, which alone, not to mention ammunition and tools, we shall find will

require more horses, than at this present moment can be procured with our means.

“ His Honour also asks, whether it is practicable to destroy the corn at the fort and at Logstown. At this question I am a little surprised, when it is known we must pass the French fort and the Ohio to get to Logstown ; and how this can be done with inferior numbers, under our disadvantages, I see not ; and, as to the ground for hoping that we may engage a sufficient party of Indians for this undertaking, I have no information, nor have I any conception ; for it is well known, that notwithstanding the expresses, whom the Indians sent to one another, and all the pains that Montour and Croghan (who, by vainly boasting of their interest with the Indians, involved the country in great calamity, by causing dependence to be placed where there was none,) could take, they never could induce above thirty fighting men to join us, and not more than one half of those were serviceable upon any occasion.

“ I could make many other remarks equally true and pertinent ; but to you, Sir, who, I am sensible, have acquired a pretty good knowledge of the country, and who see the difficulties that we labour under in getting proper necessaries, even at Winchester, it is needless. Therefore I shall only add some of the difficulties, which we are particularly subjected to in the Virginia regiment. And to begin, Sir, you are sensible of the sufferings our soldiers underwent in the last attempt, in a good season, to take possession of the Fork of the Alleghany and Monongahela. You also saw the disorders those sufferings produced among them at Winchester after they returned. These are yet

fresh in their memories, and have an irritating effect. Through the indiscretion of Mr. Spiltdorph, they got some intimation that they were again ordered out, and it immediately occasioned a general clamour, and caused six men to desert last night. This, we expect, will be the consequence every night, unless prevented by close confinement.

“ In the next place, I have orders to complete my regiment, and not a sixpence is sent for that purpose. Can it be imagined, that subjects fit for this service, who have been so much impressed with, and alarmed at, our want of provisions, which was a main objection to enlisting before, will more readily engage now without money, than they did before with it? We were then from the 1st of February till the 1st of May, and could not complete our three hundred men by forty; and the officers suffered so much by having their recruiting expenses withheld, that they have unanimously refused to engage in that duty again, unless they are repaid for the past, and a sufficient allowance is made to them in future. To show you the state of the regiment, I have sent you a report by which you will perceive what great deficiencies there are of men, arms, tents, kettles, screws (which was a fatal want before), bayonets, cartouch-boxes, and every thing else. Again, were our men ever so willing to go, for want of the proper necessaries of life they are unable to do it. The chief part are almost naked, and scarcely a man has either shoes, stockings, or a hat. These things the merchants will not credit them for. The country has made no provision; they have not money themselves; and it cannot be expected, that the officers will engage for them again, personally, having suffered

greatly on this head already ; especially, now, when we have all the reason in the world to believe, that they will desert whenever they have an opportunity. There is not a man that has a blanket to secure him from cold or wet. Ammunition is a material article, and that is to come from Williamsburg, or wherever the governor can procure it. An account must be first sent of the quantity which is wanted ; this, added to the carriage up, with the necessary tools, that must be had, as well as the time for bringing them round, will, I believe, advance us into that season, when it is usual, in more moderate climates, to retreat into winter-quarters, but here, with us, to begin a campaign !

“ The promises of those traders, who offer to contract for large quantities of flour, are not to be depended upon ; a most flagrant instance of which we experienced in Croghan, who was under obligation to Major Carlyle for the delivery of this article in a certain time, and who was an eye-witness to our wants ; yet he had the assurance, during our sufferings, to tantalise us, and boast of the quantity he could furnish, as he did of the number of horses he could command. Notwithstanding, we were equally disappointed of these also ; for out of two hundred he had contracted for, we never had above twenty-five employed in bringing the flour engaged for the camp ; and even this, small as the quantity was, did not arrive within a month of the time it was to have been delivered.

“ Another thing worthy of consideration, is, that if we depend on Indian assistance, we must have a large quantity of proper Indian goods to reward their services, and make them presents. It is owing to this alone, that the French command such

an influence among them, and that we have conciliated so few. This, with the scarcity of provisions, would induce them to ask, when they were to join us, if we meant to starve them as well as ourselves. But I will have done, and only add assurances of the regard and affection with which I am, &c."

The discretion and foresight of this young officer, then only twenty-two years of age, were not lost upon the governor and council; and the chimerical scheme of attacking a superior and well-fortified enemy with an equally inadequate supply of money, men, and provisions, was abandoned.

Allusion has already been made to some jealousies which arose among the government officers employed in the last campaign, owing to the superiority in command with which Colonel Washington was invested. This disaffection showed itself after the close of the campaign, in a series of manœuvres on the part of the regular officers; in consequence of which, new regulations were published from the war office. By these regulations it was provided, that all officers commissioned by the king, or his commander-in-chief, in North America, should take rank of all officers commissioned by the governors of the respective provinces. And, further, that the general and field officers of the provincial troops should have no rank when serving with the general and field officers commissioned by the crown; but that all captains, and other inferior officers of the royal troops, should take rank over provincial officers of the same degree having senior commissions.

The disaffection occasioned in the minds of those officers who had been serving against the French,

was such as might have been expected from the impolitic and invidious character of this measure. A further innovation was therefore introduced by Governor Dinwiddie, which he communicated to the Earl of Halifax in a letter dated October the 25th 1754.

“As there have been,” he writes, “some disputes between the regulars and the officers appointed by me, I am now determined to reduce our regiment into Independent Companies, so that from our forces there will be no other distinguished officer above a Captain.” This, however, was far from satisfactory to Colonel Washington. He at once resolved to hold no lower rank than he had hitherto held, and accordingly resigned his commission.

Meantime Governor Sharpe of Maryland received the King's commission as Commander in chief of all the forces engaged against the French; and Colonel Fitzhugh was appointed to the temporary command of the army, whilst General Sharpe was absent visiting the military posts, and executing his official duties as Governor. Knowing the great value of Colonel Washington's experience and talents, the General was strongly desirous of bringing him back to the service. To effect this object, Colonel Fitzhugh wrote him a letter filled with persuasive arguments to induce him to change his resolution. “I am confident” he observes, “that the General has a very great regard for you, and will by every circumstance in his power make you happy. For my part, I shall be extremely fond of your continuing in the service, and would advise you by no means to quit it. In regard to the Independent Companies, they will in no shape interfere with you, as you will hold your post

during their continuance here, and when the regiment is reduced, will have a separate duty." To these overtures, Colonel Washington returned the following manly and characteristic reply.

TO COLONEL WILLIAM FITZHUGH.

" 15 November, 1754.

" DEAR SIR,

"I was favoured with your letter from Rousby Hall, of the 4th instant. It demands my best acknowledgments for the particular marks of esteem you have expressed therein, and for the kind assurances of his Excellency Governor Sharpe's good wishes towards me. I also thank you, and sincerely, Sir, for your friendly intention of making my situation easy, if I return to the service; and I do not doubt, could I submit to the terms, that I should be as happy under your command in the absence of the General, as under any gentleman's whatever. But I think the disparity between the present offer of a company and my former rank too great to expect any real satisfaction or enjoyment in a corps, where I once had, or thought I had, a right to command; even if his Excellency had power to suspend the orders received in the Secretary of War's letter, which, by the by, I am very far from thinking he has, or that he will attempt to do it, without fuller instructions than I believe he has received; especially, too, as there has been a representation of this matter by Governor Dinwiddie, and, I believe, the Assembly of this province.

"All that I presume the General can do, is, to prevent the different corps from interfering, which

will occasion the duty to be done by corps, instead of detachments ; a very inconvenient way, as found by experience.

“ You make mention in your letter of my continuing in the service, and retaining my colonel's commission. This idea has filled me with surprise ; for, if you think me capable of holding a commission, that has neither rank nor emolument annexed to it, you must entertain a very contemptible opinion of my weakness, and believe me to be more empty than the commission itself.

Besides, Sir, if I had time, I could enumerate many good reasons, that forbid all thoughts of my returning ; and which to you, or any other person, would, upon the strictest scrutiny, appear to be well founded. I must be reduced to a very low command, and subjected to that of many who have acted as my inferior officers. In short, every captain, bearing the King's commission, every half-pay officer, or others appearing with such a commission, would rank before me. For these reasons I choose to submit to the loss of health, which I have, however, already sustained, (not to mention that of effects,) and the fatigue I have undergone in our first efforts, rather than subject myself to the same inconveniences, and run the risk of a second disappointment.

“ I shall have the consolation of knowing, that I have opened the way, when the smallness of our numbers exposed us to the attacks of a superior enemy ; that I have hitherto stood the heat and brunt of the day, and escaped untouched in time of extreme danger ; and that I have the thanks of my country, for the services I have rendered it.

“ It is to be hoped the project will answer ; it

shall meet with my acquiescence in every thing except personal services. I herewith enclose Governor Sharpe's letter, which I beg you will return to him, with my acknowledgments for the favour he intended me. Assure him, Sir, as you truly may, of my reluctance to quit the service, and of the pleasure I should have received in attending his fortunes. Inform him, also, that it was to obey the call of honour, and the advice of my friends, that I declined it, and not to gratify any desire I had to leave the military line. My inclinations are strongly bent to arms.

"The length of this letter, and the small room I have left, tell me how necessary it is to conclude ; which I will do, with the assurance that you shall always find me

"Truly and sincerely your most humble servant."

This communication was conclusive, and Washington cheerfully retired to Mount Vernon, the picturesque estate which his brother Lawrence had bequeathed him, and resolved to devote his days in rural retirement, to the pursuits of philosophy and the cares of agriculture.

CHAPTER IV.

General Braddock arrives in America as Commander-in-Chief—Invites Washington to join him as Aide-de-camp—Washington accordingly rejoins the Army—Difficulty of obtaining Supplies—Is seized with a Fever—Meets with the Enemy near Fort Duquesne—General Braddock's Defeat.

WHILE Colonel Washington was engaged in re-arranging his domestic affairs at Mount Vernon General Braddock received his Majesty's commission as Commander-in-chief of the forces in America ; and arrived in Virginia, bringing with him, if possible, still more obnoxious commands respecting the relative position of British and American officers employed in the service. He had no sooner entered upon his functions than he became sensible of the importance of obtaining Washington's assistance ; and being fully aware of the motives which forbade him to accept a commission, he communicated to him an invitation to become one of his family, and accompany him in the campaign as his volunteer aide-de-camp. To this proposal, though counter to the wishes of his family, Colonel Washington promptly assented ; and, after a short delay, in which he made some hasty arrangements at home, he departed on the 23rd of April, 1755, to join the general at Will's Creek, where the fort now known as Fort Cumberland was already erected. Here the army remained until the 12th

of June collecting horses, wagons, and provisions ; —a service which was retarded by a cause which will be seen in constant operation throughout the career of Washington, embarrassing and retarding the most important measures ; namely, the utter apathy and selfishness of the bulk of the people. The merit of procuring the wagons and horses here mentioned, was entirely due to a simple individual, then comparatively unknown ; but whose name is now familiar to the ears of the whole civilised world. The singularity of this instance of public spirit may be learned from the relation of it by General Braddock, in a letter to the secretary of state :—

“ Before I left Williamsburg,” he writes, “ the quarter-master general told me that I might depend upon twenty-five hundred horses, and two hundred wagons, from Virginia and Maryland ; but I had great reason to doubt it, having experienced the false dealings of all in this country with whom I had been concerned. Hence before my departure from Frederic, I agreed with MR. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, postmaster in Pennsylvania, who has great credit in that province, to hire one hundred and fifty wagons, and the necessary number of horses. This he accomplished with promptitude and fidelity, and it is almost the only instance of address and integrity which I have seen in these provinces.”

Before the army moved from Cumberland, Colonel Washington executed the service of obtaining and convoying from Williamsburg, four thousand pounds for the use of the army ; after which, his utmost endeavours were exerted to expedite the march to Fort Duquesne before the French, who

were then exceedingly weak, could be reinforced from the north. But his efforts were interrupted for a time by an alarming fever, which seized him but a few days after his departure, and disabled him from riding on horseback. Steadily refusing to be left behind, he was conveyed in a covered wagon, and thus continued to the general the benefit of his advice. In accordance with his wishes, Braddock selected twelve hundred men, with as little incumbrance of baggage and artillery as was consistent with the success of the expedition, with a view to push forward towards Fort Duquesne, leaving the heavy artillery and baggage under the command of a subaltern officer. Still, however, the rapidity of their march by no means accorded with the energetic spirit of the disabled aide-de-camp. In a letter written to his brother John at this time, he complains that, "instead of pushing on with vigour, without regarding a little rough road, they were halting to level every mole-hill, and to erect bridges over every brook, by which means we were four days getting twelve miles." At length the illness of Washington had become so severe that he received the positive orders of his general to remain behind with a guard, as the only means of preserving his life. To this he consented under the solemn promise of the general, that he should be brought up before their arrival at Fort Duquesne.

On the 8th of July, Colonel Washington rejoined the advanced division of the army under the immediate command of the general. He was conveyed in a covered wagon, and though extremely debilitated by fever, he on the next day mounted his horse and attended the general. On this day

occurred one of the most fatal and singular defeats which ever befel the American arms. This took place when they had arrived within ten miles of the French fort. In conveying the intelligence of this fatal event to his mother, immediately after its occurrence, Washington writes :—

“ We marched to that place, without any considerable loss, having only now and then a straggler picked up by the French and scouting Indians. When we came there, we were attacked by a party of French and Indians, whose number, I am persuaded, did not exceed three hundred men ; while ours consisted of about one thousand three hundred well-armed troops, chiefly regular soldiers, who were struck with such a panic, that they behaved with more cowardice than it is possible to conceive. The officers behaved gallantly, in order to encourage their men, for which they suffered greatly, there being near sixty killed and wounded ; a large proportion of the number we had.

“ The Virginian troops showed a good deal of bravery, and were nearly all killed ; for I believe, out of three companies that were there, scarcely thirty men are left alive. Captain Peyrouny, and all his officers down to a corporal, were killed. Captain Polson had nearly as hard a fate, for only one of his was left. In short, the dastardly behaviour of those they call regulars exposed all others, that were inclined to do their duty, to almost certain death ; and, at last, in despite of all the efforts of the officers to the contrary, they ran, as sheep pursued by dogs, and it was impossible to rally them.”

And again in another letter ;—

“It is true, we have been beaten, shamefully beaten, by a handful of men, who only intended to molest and disturb our march. Victory was their smallest expectation. But see the wondrous works of Providence, and the uncertainty of human things! We, but a few moments before, believed our numbers almost equal to the Canadian force; they only expected to annoy us. Yet, contrary to all expectation and human probability, and even to the common course of things, we were totally defeated, and sustained the loss of every thing. This, as you observe, must be an affecting story to the colony, and will, no doubt, license the tongues of people to censure those whom they think most blamable; which, by the bye, often falls very wrongfully. I join very heartily with you in believing, that when this story comes to be related in future annals, it will meet with unbelief and indignation, for had I not been witness to the fact on that fatal day, I should scarcely have given credit to it even now.”

An account of the engagement, compiled with great care, is found in the recent work of Mr. Sparks, to which reference has been made, and from it the following particulars are drawn.

On arriving at the junction of the Youghiogany and Monongahela rivers the officers and soldiers were in the highest spirits, and firm in the conviction that they should, in a few hours, victoriously enter the walls of Fort Duquesne.

“The steep and rugged grounds, on the north side of the Monongahela, prevented the army from marching in that direction, and it was necessary in approaching the fort, now about fifteen miles dis-

tant, to ford the river twice, and march a part of the way on the south side. Early on the morning of the 9th all things were in readiness, and the whole train passed through the river a little below the mouth of the Youghiogany, and proceeded in perfect order along the southern margin of the Monongahela. Washington was often heard to say during his lifetime, that the most beautiful spectacle he had ever beheld was the display of the British troops on this eventful morning. Every man was neatly dressed in full uniform, the soldiers were arranged in columns and marched in exact order, the sun gleamed from their burnished arms, the river flowed tranquilly on their right, and the deep forest overshadowed them with solemn grandeur on their left. Officers and men were equally inspirited with cheering hopes and confident anticipations.

“ In this manner they marched forward till about noon, when they arrived at the second crossing-place, ten miles from Fort Duquesne. They halted but a little time, and then began to ford the river and regain its northern bank. As soon as they had crossed, they came upon a level plain, elevated but a few feet above the surface of the river, and extending northward nearly half a mile from its margin. Then commenced a gradual ascent at an angle of about three degrees, which terminated in hills of a considerable height at no great distance beyond. The road from the fording-place to Fort Duquesne led across the plain and up this ascent, and thence proceeded through an uneven country, at that time covered with wood.

“ By the order of the march, a body of three hundred men, under Colonel Gage, made the ad-

vanced party, which was immediately followed by another of two hundred. Next came the General with the columns of artillery, the main body of the army, and the baggage. At one o'clock the whole had crossed the river, and almost at this moment a sharp firing was heard upon the advanced parties, who were now ascending the hill, and had got forward about a hundred yards from the termination of the plain. A heavy discharge of musketry was poured in upon their front, which was the first intelligence they had of the proximity of an enemy, and this was suddenly followed by another on their right flank. They were filled with the greater consternation, as no enemy was in sight, and the firing seemed to proceed from an invisible foe. They fired in their turn, however, but quite at random and obviously without effect, as the enemy kept up a discharge in quick and continued succession.

“ The General advanced speedily to the relief of these detachments; but before he could reach the spot, which they occupied, they gave way and fell back upon the artillery and the other columns of the army, causing extreme confusion, and striking the whole mass with such a panic, that no order could afterwards be restored. The General and the officers behaved with the utmost courage, and used every effort to rally the men, and bring them to order, but all in vain. In this state they continued nearly three hours, huddling together in confused bodies, firing irregularly, shooting down their own officers and men, and doing no perceptible harm to the enemy. The Virginia provincials were the only troops who seemed to retain their senses, and they behaved with a bravery and reso-

lution worthy of a better fate. They adopted the Indian mode, and fought each man for himself behind a tree. This was prohibited by the General, who endeavoured to form his men into platoons and columns, as if they had been manœuvring on the plains of Flanders. Meantime the French and Indians, concealed in the ravines and behind trees, kept up a deadly and unceasing discharge of musketry, singling out their objects, taking deliberate aim, and producing a carnage almost unparalleled in the annals of modern warfare. More than half of the whole army, which had crossed the river in so proud an array only three hours before, were killed or wounded, the General himself had received a mortal wound, and many of his best officers had fallen by his side."

"In describing the action a few days afterwards, Colonel Orme wrote to the Governor of Pennsylvania :—' The men were so extremely deaf to the exhortation of the General and the officers, that they fired away in the most irregular manner all their ammunition, and then ran off, leaving to the enemy the artillery, ammunition, provision, and baggage ; nor could they be persuaded to stop till they got as far as Gist's plantation, nor there only in part, many of them proceeding as far as Colonel Dunbar's party, who lay six miles on this side. The officers were absolutely sacrificed by their good behaviour, advancing sometimes in bodies, sometimes separately, hoping by such example to engage the soldiers to follow them, but to no purpose. The General had five horses shot under him, and at last received a wound through his right arm into his lungs, of which he died the 13th instant. Secretary Shirley was shot through the

head; Captain Morris, wounded. Colonel Washington had two horses shot under him, and his clothes shot through in several places, behaving the whole time with the greatest courage and resolution. Sir Peter Halket was killed upon the spot. Colonel Burton and Sir John St. Clair were wounded.' In addition to these, the other field-officers wounded were Lieutenant-Colonel Gage (afterwards so well known as the commander of the British forces in Boston, at the beginning of the Revolution), Colonel Orme, Major Sparks, and Brigade-Major Halket. Ten captains were killed, and five wounded; fifteen lieutenants killed, and twenty-two wounded; the whole number of officers in the engagement was eighty-six, of whom twenty-six were killed, and thirty-seven wounded. The killed and wounded of the privates amounted to seven hundred and fourteen. Of these at least one half were supposed to be killed. Their bodies, left on the field of action, were stripped and scalped by the Indians. All the artillery, ammunition, provisions, and baggage, every thing in the train of the army, fell into the enemy's hands, and were given up to be pillaged by the savages. General Braddock's papers were also taken, among which were his instructions and correspondence with the ministry after his arrival in Virginia. The same fate befell the papers of Colonel Washington, including a private journal and his official correspondence during his campaign of the preceding year."

In accounting for this singular and fearful defeat, Mr. Sparks enters into a description of the locality, which serves materially to elucidate the causes of it.

“We have seen that Braddock’s advanced columns, after crossing the valley extending for nearly half a mile from the margin of the river, began to move up a hill, so uniform in its ascent, that it was little else than an inclined plane of a somewhat crowning form. Down this inclined surface extended two ravines, beginning near together, at about one hundred and fifty yards from the bottom of the hill, and proceeding in different directions till they terminated in the valley below. In these ravines the French and Indians were concealed and protected. At this day they are from eight to ten feet deep, and sufficient in extent to contain at least a thousand men. At the time of the battle, the ground was covered with trees and long grass, so that the ravines were entirely hidden from view, till they were approached within a few feet. Indeed, at the present day, although the place is cleared from trees, and converted into pasture, they are perceptible only at a very short distance. By this knowledge of the local peculiarities of the battle-ground, the mystery, that the British conceived themselves to be contending with an invisible foe, is solved. Such was literally the fact. They were so paraded between the ravines, that their whole front and right flank were exposed to the incessant fire of the enemy, who discharged their muskets over the edge of the ravines, concealed during that operation by the grass and bushes, and protected by an invincible barrier below the surface of the earth. William Butler, a veteran soldier still living (1832), who was in this action, and afterwards at the Plains of Abraham, said to me, ‘We could only tell where the enemy were by the smoke of their muskets.’ A few scattered Indians were behind

trees, and some were killed venturing out to take scalps, but much the larger portion fought wholly in the ravines.

“ It is not probable that either General Braddock or any one of his officers suspected the actual situation of the enemy, during the whole bloody contest. It was a fault in the General, for which no apology can be offered, that he did not keep scouts and guards in advance and on the wings of his army, who would have made all proper discoveries before the whole had been brought into a snare. This neglect was the primary cause of his defeat, which might have been avoided. Had he charged with the bayonet, the ravines would have been cleared instantly ; or had he brought his artillery to the points where the ravines terminated in the valley, and scoured them with grape-shot, the same consequence would have followed. But the total insubordination of his troops would have prevented both these movements, even if he had become acquainted with the ground in the early part of the action. The disasters of this day, and the fate of the commander, brave and resolute as he undoubtedly was, are to be ascribed to his contempt of Indian warfare, his overweening confidence in the prowess of veteran troops, his obstinate self-complacency, his disregard of prudent counsel, and his negligence in leaving his army exposed to a surprise on their march. He freely consulted Colonel Washington, whose experience and judgment, notwithstanding his youth, claimed the highest respect for his opinions ; but the General gave little heed to his advice.”

“ When the battle was over, and the remnant of Braddock’s army had gained, in their flight, the

opposite bank of the river, Colonel Washington was despatched by the General to meet Colonel Dunbar and order forward wagons for the wounded with all possible speed. But it was not till the 11th, after they had reached Gist's plantation with great difficulty and much suffering from hunger, that any arrived. The General was at first brought off in a tumbril; he was next put on horseback, but, being unable to ride, was obliged to be carried by the soldiers. They all reached Dunbar's camp, to which the panic had already extended, and a day was passed there in the greatest confusion. The artillery was destroyed, and the public stores and heavy baggage were burnt, by whose order was never known. They moved forward on the 13th, and that night General Braddock died, and was buried in the road, for the purpose of concealing his body from the Indians. The spot is still pointed out, within a few yards of the present National Road, and about a mile west of the site of Fort Necessity at the Great Meadows. Captain Stewart, of the Virginia forces, had taken particular charge of him from the time he was wounded till his death. On the 17th the sick and wounded arrived at Fort Cumberland, and were soon after joined by Colonel Dunbar with the remaining fragments of the army. The French sent out a party as far as Dunbar's camp, and destroyed every thing that was left. Colonel Washington, being in very feeble health, proceeded in a few days to Mount Vernon."

In the midst of the trying scenes of this day, Washington developed most signally those exalted qualities of character which were destined in after times, and on a more conspicuous theatre, to com-

mand the admiration of the world. In the densest fire and the hottest fight his emaciated form was seen bearing every indication of the most undisturbed composure. While his horses successively sunk under him mortally wounded, and his clothes were torn with bullets, he seemed to betray the consciousness that "he wore a charmed life." The remarkable serenity of his mind, and the still more remarkable inviolateness of his person, as he rode about the field tempting death, and "trampling upon impossibilities," may well have suggested the idea that no lighter interests than a nation's liberty were involved in that miraculous preservation.

CHAPTER V.

Death of General Braddock—Washington is appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Forces to be raised in Virginia—Disadvantages under which he was placed—General View of the War from his Appointment to the end of 1757—General Abercrombie appointed Commander-in-Chief in America—Delay and Mismanagement of the Campaign—The Army marches against Fort Duquesne—Takes Possession of the Fort—Close of the War—Washington retires from the Service.

It was not the least considerable disaster attending this defeat that General Braddock received a mortal wound in the conflict, and expired a few days after at Fort Cumberland. The fugitive remains of his army joined the division under Colonel Dunbar, who led them into winter quarters at Philadelphia. The frontiers were thus left unprotected, at the mercy of the invaders; a condition far more calamitous than can be conceived by those who are ignorant of the horrors of Indian warfare.

The assembly of Virginia was in session when the gloomy intelligence of these events reached them. They immediately voted forty thousand pounds for the public service, and handsome rewards to the officers and troops who had fought under General Braddock. At the same time they decided to raise the Virginia regiment to one thousand men; and of this force Washington, who had retired again to Mount Vernon, was, on the 14th of Au-

gust 1755, appointed colonel, and commander-in-chief of all forces raised and to be raised in Virginia, with power to appoint his field officers. He could now resume a post of military command without dishonour, and he promptly accepted the appointment, and repaired to Williamsburg to arrange with the governor the plan of future operations. A few general remarks will convey a correct idea of the nature of the service in which Washington was now engaged. Its incidents were monotonous ; and a minute recital of them would be a continuous narrative of inhumanity and suffering. The causes of the calamities which Colonel Washington was destined to witness without being able to relieve them were, first, the utter ignorance of the governors and councils of the states, in whose hands lay all the resources of the war, and with whom it rested to direct its movements. In the next place the universal apathy of the people and the consequent inadequacy of the forces, and precariousness of the supplies ; thirdly, the insuetude of the whole country to a posture of defence ; and, lastly, the remissness and mismanagement on the part of the state, which induced those who had assumed the character of protectors of their countrymen to retire from the service with disgust. Under these disadvantages Washington was, it must be confessed, in excellent training for the career which lay before him ; but the fact should never be lost sight of, which the history not only of this, but of the far more important war which Washington subsequently conducted, perpetually tends to confirm,—that the successes which made them glorious are almost solely attributable to him ; and were gained, for the most part, in spite

of the obstinate and embarrassing interference of those under whom he acted. The history of this war, from the time of Colonel Washington's appointment to the command in August 1755, to the close of the year 1757, offers only a continual succession of failures arising from the causes already specified, and more particularly from the defensive position which the inadequacy of his forces obliged him to maintain. It would be alike tedious and unprofitable to detail the particulars of these campaigns. A few selections from Washington's correspondence will afford all the information which is really valuable. In a letter to Governor Dinwiddie, dated from Fredericksburg, October the 14th, 1755, he writes —

“ In all things I meet with the greatest opposition.

“ No orders are obeyed, but such as a party of soldiers, or my own drawn sword, enforces. Without this, not a single horse, for the most earnest occasion, can be had,—to such a pitch has the insolence of these people arrived, by having every point hitherto submitted to them. However, I have given up none, where his Majesty's service requires the contrary, and where my proceedings are justified by my instructions ; nor will I, unless they execute what they threaten, that is, ‘ blow out our brains.’ ”

In complaining, in the same letter, of his inadequate authority to enforce military discipline, he says—

“ I would again hint the necessity of putting the militia under a better regulation, had I not men-

tioned it twice before, and a third time may seem impertinent. But I must once more beg leave to declare, for here I am more immediately concerned, that, unless the Assembly will pass an act to enforce the military law in all its parts, I must, with great regret, decline the honour that has been so generously intended me. I am urged to this, by the fore-knowledge I have of failing in every point, that might justly be expected from a person invested with full power to execute his authority. I see the growing insolence of the soldiers, and the indolence and inactivity of the officers, who are all sensible how limited their punishments are, compared with what they ought to be. In fine, I can plainly see, that under the present establishment, we shall become a nuisance, an insupportable charge to our country, and never answer any one expectation of the Assembly. And here I must assume the freedom to express some surprise, that we alone should be so tenacious of our liberty, as not to invest a power, where interest and policy so unanswerably demand it, and whence so much good must consequently ensue. Do we not know, that every nation under the sun finds its account therein, and that, without it, no order or regularity can be observed? Why then should it be expected from us, who are all young and inexperienced, to govern and keep up a proper spirit of discipline without laws, when the best and most experienced can scarcely do it with them? If we consult our interest, I am sure it loudly calls for them. I can confidently assert, that recruiting, clothing, arming, maintaining, and subsisting soldiers, who have since deserted, have cost the country an immense

sum, which might have been prevented, were we under restraints, that would terrify the soldiers from such practices."

He thus pathetically represents the sufferings to which those administrative errors gave rise in a letter, dated from Winchester, April the 22nd, 1756.

"I see their situation, know their danger, and participate their sufferings, without having it in my power to give them further relief, than uncertain promises. In short, I see inevitable destruction in so clear a light, that, unless vigorous measures are taken by the Assembly, and speedy assistance sent from below, the poor inhabitants that are now in forts, must unavoidably fall, while the remainder are flying before the barbarous foe. In fine, the melancholy situation of the people, the little prospect of assistance, the gross and scandalous abuses cast upon the officers in general, which is reflecting upon me in particular, for suffering misconduct of such extraordinary kinds, and the distant prospect, if any, of gaining honour and reputation in the service,—cause me to lament the hour, that gave me a commission, and would induce me, at any other time than this of imminent danger, to resign, without one hesitating moment, a command, from which I never expect to reap either honour or benefit; but, on the contrary, have almost an absolute certainty of incurring displeasure below, while the murder of helpless families may be laid to my account here!

"The supplicating tears of the women, and moving petitions of the men, melt me into such deadly sorrow, that I solemnly declare, if I know

my own mind, I could offer myself a willing sacrifice to the butchering enemy, provided that would contribute to the people's ease."

But the fullest statement of the disadvantages under which he laboured, is to be found in a letter to Lord Loudoun, dated February, 1757. In this communication he strikingly shows the absurdity of expecting him to defend a frontier of three hundred miles with fifteen hundred men. He details the most convincing reasons for adopting aggressive operations, more particularly upon the stronghold of the enemy, Fort Duquesne. He complains loudly of the utter insufficiency and folly of the existing military regulations, of the incompetency of the soldiers' pay and the want of punctuality in remitting it, and of any provision for those who might be wounded and disabled in the service. He portrays the uselessness of the militia, the indifference of the people at large, and finally crowns the catalogue of his complaints, with some of a personal kind.

"And now, before I conclude, I must beg leave to add, that my unwearied endeavours are inadequately rewarded. The orders I receive are full of ambiguity. I am left, like a wanderer in the wilderness, to proceed at hazard. I am answerable for consequences, and blamed, without the privilege of defence. This, my Lord, I beg leave to declare, is at present my situation. Therefore, it is not to be wondered at, if, under such peculiar circumstances, I should be sick of a service, which promises so little of a soldier's reward. I have long been satisfied of the impossibility of continuing in this service, without loss of honour. Indeed, I was

fully convinced of it before I accepted the command the second time, seeing the cloudy prospect before me; and I did for this reason reject the offer, until I was ashamed any longer to refuse, not caring to expose my character to public censure. The solicitations of the country overcame my objections, and induced me to accept it."

The result of this state of things was that for three years, during which all the remonstrances of Colonel Washington were disregarded, the history of the war is the history of continual and successful irruptions made by the French and Indians across the least defended parts of the frontier; in which they massacred all the inhabitants without regard to age or sex, burnt and destroyed such property as they could not remove, and returned across the mountains with impunity, loaded with spoil and sated with slaughter.

At length, at the close of the year 1757, General Abercrombie was appointed to the supreme command in America, while the command in the middle district was fortunately confided to Major Forbes. To the inexpressible delight of Colonel Washington, the reduction of Fort Duquesne was determined on as the primary object of the campaign, and now, for the first time for years, his hopes of engaging in active and successful service were revived.

After considerable delays, orders were received to collect the regiment at Winchester, whence early in July 1758, they were removed to Cumberland. No doubt existed in the mind of Washington that Braddock's road would be fixed on as the route. It was therefore to his great astonishment that he received on the last day of July a request from

Colonel Bouquet to come and consult him on the opening of a new route. To this Colonel Washington replied :—

“ I shall most cheerfully work on any road, pursue any route, or enter upon any service, that the General or yourself may think me usefully employed in, or qualified for, and shall never have a will of my own, when a duty is required of me. But since you desire me to speak my sentiments freely, permit me to observe, that after having conversed with all the guides, and having been informed by others, who have a knowledge of the country, I am convinced that a road, to be compared with General Braddock's, or, indeed, that will be fit for transportation even by packhorses, cannot be made. I have no predilection for the route you have in contemplation for me, not because difficulties appear therein, but because I doubt whether satisfaction can be given in the execution of the plan. I know not what reports you may have received from your reconnoitring parties ; but I have been uniformly told, that, if you expect a tolerable road by Raystown, you will be disappointed, for no movement can be made that way without destroying our horses.”

In reply Colonel Bouquet wrote as follows :—

““ Nothing can exceed your generous dispositions for the service. I see with the utmost satisfaction, that you are above the influences of prejudice, and ready to go heartily where reason and judgment shall direct. I wish, sincerely, that we may all entertain one and the same opinion ; therefore I desire to have an interview with you at the houses

built half way between our camps. I will communicate all the intelligence, which it has been in my power to collect; and, by weighing impartially the advantages and disadvantages of each route, I hope we shall be able between us to determine what is most eligible, and save the General trouble and loss of time.' ”

An interview accordingly took place, at which the subject was fully discussed.

The result of this interview may be learned from the following note addressed by Washington to Major Francis Halket :—

“ Camp, at Fort Cumberland, 2 August, 1758.

“ MY DEAR HALKET,

“ I am just returned from a conference with Colonel Bouquet. I find him fixed, I think I may say unalterably fixed, to lead you a new way to the Ohio, through a road, every inch of which is to be cut at this advanced season, when we have scarce time left to tread the beaten track, universally confessed to be the best passage through the mountains.

“ If Colonel Bouquet succeeds in this point with the General, all is lost,—all is lost indeed,—our enterprise will be ruined, and we shall be stopped at the Laurel Hill this winter; but not to gather *laurels*, except of the kind that covers the mountains. The southern Indians will turn against us, and these colonies will be desolated by such an accession to the enemy's strength. These must be the consequences of a miscarriage; and a miscarriage is the almost necessary consequence of an attempt to march the army by this new route.”

Unwilling to abandon all hope of influencing Bouquet's resolution, he again wrote to him, detailing at large, and in the most convincing manner, the grounds on which he recommended the route by Braddock's road. Still his endeavours were fruitless, and the 1st of September, 1758, saw him and his soldiers still at Fort Cumberland. From this place he wrote the following indignant letter to the Speaker of the Virginian House of Burgesses :—

“ MY DEAR SIR,

“ WE are still encamped here, very sickly, and quite dispirited at the prospect before us.

“ That appearance of glory, which we had once in view, that hope, that laudable ambition of serving our country, and meriting its applause, are now no more ; all is dwindled into ease, sloth, and fatal inactivity. In a word, all is lost, if the ways of men in power, like certain ways of Providence, are not inscrutable. But we, who view the actions of great men at a distance, can only form conjectures agreeably to a limited perception ; and, being ignorant of the comprehensive schemes, which may be in contemplation, might mistake egregiously in judging of things from appearances, or by the lump. Yet every fool will have his notions,—will prattle and talk away ; and why may not I ? We seem then, in my opinion, to act under the guidance of an evil genius. The conduct of our leaders, if not actuated by superior orders, is tempered with something, I do not care to give a name to. Nothing now but a miracle can bring this campaign to a happy issue.

“ In my last, if I remember rightly, I told you,

that I had employed my small abilities in opposing the measures then concerting. To do this, I not only represented the advanced season, the difficulty of cutting a new road over these mountains, the short time left for that service, the moral certainty of its obstructing our march, and the consequent miscarriage of the expedition; I endeavoured to represent, also, the hard struggle Virginia had made this year in raising a second regiment upon so short a notice, the great expense of doing it, and her inability for future exertion. I spoke my fears concerning the southern Indians, in the event of a miscarriage. But I spoke all unavailingly, for the road was immediately begun, and from one to two thousand men have since constantly wrought upon it. By the last accounts I have received, they had cut it to the foot of Laurel Hill, about thirty-five miles; and I suppose by this time fifteen hundred men have taken post at a place called Loyal Hanna, about ten miles further, where our next fort is intended to be constructed.

“ We have certain intelligence, that the French strength at Fort Duquesne, on the 13th ultimo, did not exceed eight hundred men, Indians included, of whom there appeared to be about three or four hundred. This account is corroborated on all hands. Two officers of the first Virginia regiment, Chew and Allen, have since come from thence, both in different parties, and at different times, after lying a day or two concealed in full view of the fort, and observing the motions and strength of the enemy. See, therefore, how our time has been misspent. Behold how the golden opportunity has been lost, perhaps never more to be regained! How is it to be accounted for? Can General

Forbes have orders for this? Impossible Will, then, our injured country pass by such abuses? I hope not. Rather let a full representation of the matter go to his Majesty. Let him know how grossly his glory and interest, and the public money, have been prostituted."

Colonel Washington was shortly afterwards ordered on to Raystown; prior to which, Major Grant, with a force of eight hundred men, had been detached to reconnoitre the country in the vicinity of Fort Duquesne. An obstinate engagement ensued with the enemy, who were induced to leave the fort by the boldness of their approach. In this engagement the English, and especially the Virginians, behaved with great bravery, and were defeated with a loss of two hundred and seventy-three killed, and forty-two wounded.

At length, through almost impassable roads, and by the most painful marches, they reached Fort Duquesne; of which they took peaceable possession, the enemy having evacuated and set fire to it the preceding evening, and closed the war by retreating down the Ohio in their boats. "It is evident," says Judge Marshall *, "that the capture of this place, so all-important to the middle and southern provinces, was entirely to be attributed to the British fleet, which had intercepted a considerable part of the reinforcements designed by France for her colonies, and to the success of the English and American arms, which rendered it impossible for the French in Canada to support it, and which very much weakened their influence over the Indians. Without the aid of these causes,

* Life of Washington, vol. ii. p. 90.

the extraordinary and unaccountable delays of the campaign must have defeated its object."

Thus had Colonel Washington the satisfaction of seeing the object of his wishes and efforts accomplished. His health was now seriously impaired by the arduousness of the services he had performed, and his domestic affairs had long needed his attention. He, therefore, resigned his commission, and retired again to domestic life at Mount Vernon. Perhaps the clearest view of the character which he left behind him, and of the feelings with which the army suffered the loss of his services, may be obtained from the following address, presented to him by the officers on his resigning the command. Though very inferior as a literary composition, it evinces those warm sentiments of admiration and love for Washington which was participated by the great majority of his countrymen.

ADDRESS OF THE OFFICERS TO COLONEL WASHINGTON, ON HIS RESIGNING THE COMMAND OF THE VIRGINIA FORCES.

" Dated at Fort Loudoun, 31 December, 1758.

" SIR,

" WE, your most obedient and affectionate officers, beg leave to express our great concern, at the disagreeable news we have received of your determination to resign the command of that corps, in which we have under you long served.

" The happiness we have enjoyed, and the honour we have acquired together, with the mutual regard that has always subsisted between you and

your officers, have implanted so sensible an affection in the minds of us all, that we cannot be silent on this critical occasion.

“ In our earliest infancy you took us under your tuition, trained us up in the practice of that discipline, which alone can constitute good troops, from the punctual observance of which you never suffered the least deviation.

“ Your steady adherence to impartial justice, your quick discernment, and invariable regard to merit, wisely intended to inculcate those genuine sentiments of true honour and passion for glory, from which the greatest military achievements have been derived, first heightened our natural emulation and our desire to excel. How much we improved by those regulations and your own example, with what alacrity we have hitherto discharged our duty, with what cheerfulness we have encountered the severest toils, especially while under your particular directions, we submit to yourself, and flatter ourselves that we have in a great measure answered your expectations.

“ Judge, then, how sensibly we must be affected with the loss of such an excellent commander, such a sincere friend, and so affable a companion. How rare is it to find these amiable qualities blended together in one man ! How great the loss of such a man ! Adieu to that superiority, which the enemy have granted us over other troops, and which even the regulars and provincials have done us the honour publicly to acknowledge ! Adieu to that strict discipline and order, which you have always maintained ! Adieu to that happy union and harmony, which have been our principal cement !

“ It gives us additional sorrow, when we reflect, to find our unhappy country will receive a loss no less irreparable than our own. Where will it meet a man so experienced in military affairs, one so renowned for patriotism, conduct, and courage? Who has so great a knowledge of the enemy we have to deal with? Who so well acquainted with their situation and strength? Who so much respected by the soldiery? Who, in short, so able to support the military character of Virginia?

“ Your approved love to your King and country, and your uncommon perseverance in promoting the honour and true interest of the service, convince us that the most cogent reasons only could induce you to quit it; yet we, with the greatest deference, presume to entreat you to suspend those thoughts for another year, and to lead us on to assist in the glorious work of extirpating our enemies, towards which so considerable advances have been already made. In you we place the most implicit confidence. Your presence only will cause a steady firmness and vigour to actuate every breast, despising the greatest dangers, and thinking light of toils and hardships, while led on by the man we know and love.

“ But if we must be so unhappy as to part, if the exigencies of your affairs force you to abandon us, we beg it as our last request, that you will recommend some person most capable to command, whose military knowledge, whose honour, whose conduct, and whose disinterested principles, we may depend on.

“ Frankness, sincerity, and a certain openness of soul, are the true characteristics of an officer, and we flatter ourselves that you do not think us capable of saying any thing contrary to the purest

dictates of our minds. Fully persuaded of this, we beg leave to assure you, that, as you have hitherto been the actuating soul of our whole corps, we shall at all times pay the most invariable regard to your will and pleasure, and will always be happy to demonstrate by our actions with how much respect and esteem we are, &c."

CHAPTER VI.

Colonel Washington's Retirement for Fifteen Years—His Marriage—Is elected a Member of the Virginia House of Burgesses—Anecdotes of his Private Life—New Relations of America and Great Britain—Parliamentary Proceedings in order to derive a direct Revenue from America—Conduct of the States—Opinion of Washington—Opposition to the Measures in the British Parliament.

ON arriving at Mount Vernon, Colonel Washington found that his private and domestic affairs had long needed his superintendence ; and with that versatility and energy which form the capital distinctions of the great and decided mind, he betook himself to the administration of his own concerns. Here he displayed the same general features of character by which he was signalised when he led the armies and fought the battles of his country. The fixedness and tenacity of purpose which we have seen marking his varied military operations, now reappeared in the systematic energy with which he reduced to order those complicated interests which had long been endangered by irregularity and neglect ; while the same imperturbable sobriety of judgment which had availed equally with his martial valour to the preservation of his country, were again exhibited in the prudential care of minor interests, and in unvarying seemliness of deportment ; thus adding to the lively attractions

of youth, the most mature and graceful attributes of age.

Soon after his resignation of his commission, he attached himself still more closely to domestic life by marriage. The lady of his choice was Mrs. Martha Custis, widow of Mr. Daniel Parke Custis, with whom he is said to have had a fortune of twenty thousand pounds sterling, besides her dower in one of the principal estates in Virginia. He lived with her on terms of the warmest affection, and after his death her portrait, which he had worn round his neck for forty years, was found upon his breast.

On his estate at Mount Vernon, he engaged himself extensively in the business of agriculture, and is said to have been remarkable for the judgment he displayed in the improvement of his lands. Every branch of business was conducted upon system. Exact method and economy were carried into every department of his domestic concerns. He personally inspected the account of his overseers every week; the divisions of his farms were numbered, and the expense of cultivation, and the produce of each lot were exactly registered; so that at one view he could determine the profit or loss of any particular crop, and ascertain the comparative advantage of various modes of husbandry. He became one of the largest landholders in North America. Besides other tracts of great extent and value, his Mount Vernon estate consisted of nine thousand acres, which were entirely under his own management; and from it alone he, in one year, raised seven thousand bushels of wheat and ten thousand of Indian corn. His establishments, agricultural and domestic, consisted

of no fewer than a thousand persons ; and though the greater part of his farming implements were obtained from London, the linen and woollen cloth required in his business were chiefly manufactured on the estate.

It may be remarked that the habits of exactness to which reference has been made, were sometimes carried to an eccentric and whimsical excess. One or two instances of this peculiarity may not be inappropriate in this place. On one occasion, General Stone while travelling across the country with his family, found it necessary to cross a ferry belonging to Washington, and offered the ferryman a moidore in payment. The man refused it, saying that he had no means of weighing it, which his master would most assuredly do ; and in case it should fall below the standard weight, the loss, as well as the displeasure of Washington, would be visited upon him. General Stone upon this offered the man three pence more to compensate for every possible deficiency of weight. The ferryman received and duly paid it to his employer. On weighing it, it was found to be below weight to the value of three halfpence, upon which Washington wrapped up the remaining three halfpence, and remitted it to General Stone. Upon another occasion, while Washington was from home a room in his house was plastered by his order. On his return, he measured the room, and on inspecting the workman's account, discovered that he had charged fifteen shillings more than was due. Some time after the plasterer died, and his wife married another man who advertised in the provincial newspapers that he was ready to pay and receive all that was due from or to his wife's former

husband ; Washington, on seeing the paper, immediately substantiated his claim for the fifteen shillings, and received the amount !

In dwelling upon the private life of Washington spent at Mount Vernon between the years 1759 and 1774, and in adverting to the traits of private character, for the development of which scarcely any other opportunity was afforded than this interval of fifteen years, it is the painful duty of his biographer to notice one obliquity of a moral kind, which, perhaps, will hardly receive the credence of posterity. To them it must appear to be a monstrous anomaly, that the successful champion of the freedom of the New World, brave, generous, and humane as he unquestionably was, should himself be the possessor of a multitude of slaves ; that they constituted no small proportion of his property ; and that their dearest interests were held at his disposal, or by him delegated to the disposal of others. Perhaps this is the one blemish upon the history of George Washington, which no palliation can mitigate or conceal. It is futile to allege the custom of a nation and an age which he so far transcended ; and it is equally futile to allege the plea of necessity arising out of the state of society, since no man knew better than Washington how null and void are all the claims of expediency when opposed to the immutable principles of justice. While we lament this strange inconsistency in his character, our only consolation is found in the fact of his having in after life reprobated by his example the detestable principles and practice with which he had previously been chargeable.

It should in future be added that all who knew him bore a uniform testimony to the justice and

humanity with which he lightened those burdens which at the best are scarcely tolerable: it is only to be lamented that in this solitary instance, he evinced a want of moral susceptibility and uprightness, for which in all other respects he stood pre-eminent.

During the period of about fifteen years which Colonel Washington chiefly spent at Mount Vernon, his life was not altogether a private one. He officiated as Judge of a county court, and served as representative of his district in the Virginian House of Burgesses. Upon his first taking his seat in the house shortly after he had quitted the army, an incident occurred of sufficient interest to require a notice in this place. The house resolved to return their thanks to him in a public manner for the services he had rendered his country, and this duty devolved officially on his friend Mr. Robinson, the Speaker of the House. As soon as Colonel Washington had taken his seat, the Speaker rose and discharged the duty imposed on him with all the warmth of panegyric which personal regard and a full appreciation of his merits would dictate. The unwonted honour completely robbed the young warrior of his self-possession. He rose to express his acknowledgments; but such was his trepidation and confusion, that he could not give distinct utterance to a syllable. For a few moments he blushed, stammered, and trembled, when the Speaker with singular tact relieved him. "Sit down Mr. Washington," said he, "your modesty is equal to your valour, and that surpasses the power of any language that I possess."

In the Assembly, Colonel Washington by no means signalled himself as an orator. His was a

practical age and nation ; and the administration of its concerns offered no scope for the defence of mere political theories, or the maintenance of "metaphysic rights." Even had it been otherwise, Washington's was not the mind which was adapted to such exercises ; nor did it possess those rare endowments by means of which the few philosophical statesmen of our own country have been able to give interest to detail, and to attire with the graces of fancy the most common-place truths of politics and commerce. The interest with which his remarks were listened to, arose out of the importance of the subjects which elicited them, the manifest soundness of his views, and the unbiassed directness of his political course. Even at this early period of life, the sobriety of his judgment anticipated the claims of advanced age ; and though he rarely generated enthusiasm in his hearers, yet he almost invariably convinced their minds and obtained their concurrence.

The period was now approaching when the qualities of character which have been indicated were destined to prove as important to the well-being and liberties of his country as his military talents and enterprise. Under the auspicious influence of a temporary peace, the power and civilisation of the American colonies were keeping pace with the progressive extension of their commerce. The relations of America to Great Britain were daily changing. The implicit subservience of her protected childhood, which submitted even to the caprices of the parent government, became daily less appropriate to her adult age and independent resources ; while, on the other hand, it became increasingly evident that Britain viewed

with jealousy the growing power which could now dispense with her patronage, and wished to increase the strictness of her restraints in proportion to the increased strength which enabled her *protégé* to resist them.

It has already been stated that while the American Colonists acknowledged a general allegiance to the British crown, and submission to the enactments of the parent government, they scrupulously vindicated to themselves the right of internal taxation. It is true that they submitted to certain imposts, which though not nominally, were virtually taxes; but these were regarded in the light of arrangements for the regulation of their commerce, and not as designed to raise a revenue for the general purposes of the home government. In the early part of the French war, an attempt was made on the part of Great Britain to interfere with the claim of the Colonists at this time; a general meeting of the Governors and leading members of the provincial assemblies was held at Albany, in the State of New York; the result of its deliberations was expressed in the following resolution: "That a general council should be formed of members *to be chosen by the provincial assemblies*; which council, together with a governor to be appointed by the crown, should be authorised to make general laws, and *also to raise money from all the colonies for their common defence.*"

In this resolution there is one peculiarity which deserves a special notice. The system of taxation which it developes is founded upon the principle of a full and free representation of those who were to be subject to the impost. This principle, it should be observed, forms the nucleus of all the

arguments which were subsequently adduced by the colonists against the right of the mother country to impose internal taxes upon her American dependencies. The rights which were founded upon it were held to be sacred and inviolable, and were maintained, as will hereafter be seen, with equal earnestness by those British statesmen who opposed the encroachments of the government. The cabinet seemed to have viewed this proposal with jealousy, as a first step towards the establishment of American independence.

* “ They disapproved of the projected mode of the election of the members of the council ; nor were they satisfied with the plan of raising the requisite supplies by acts of the colonial legislatures ; and they proposed that ‘ the governors of all the colonies, attended by one or two members of their respective councils, should, from time to time, concert measures for the whole colonies ; erect forts and raise troops, with a power to draw upon the British treasury in the first instance ; but to be ultimately reimbursed by a tax to be laid on the colonies by act of parliament.’ This counter proposal was strenuously opposed by the colonists, who refused to trust their interests to governors and members of councils, since almost the whole of the former, and the great majority of the latter, were nominated by the crown. As to the plan of raising taxes in the colonies by the authority of the British parliament, they rejected it in the most peremptory manner. In the discussions which took place on this occasion, Dr. Franklin took an

* Library of Useful Knowledge—History of the American Revolution.

active part, and in a letter to Mr. Shirley, governor of Massachusetts, as Dr. Ramsay observes, ‘ he anticipated the substance of a controversy, which for twenty years employed the pens, tongues, and swords of both countries.’ In his correspondence with the governor, the American patriot intimated his apprehension, ‘ that excluding the *people* from all share in the choice of the grand council, would give extreme dissatisfaction, as well as the taxing them by act of parliament, where they have no representation. It is,’ observes he, with equal candour and good sense—‘ it is very possible that this general government might be as well and faithfully administered without the people as with them ; but where heavy burdens are to be laid upon them, it has been found useful to make it, as much as possible, their own act ; for they bear better, when they have, or think they have, some share in the direction ; and when any public measures are generally grievous, or even distasteful to the people, the wheels of government move more heavily.’ On the subject of the general characters of the governors of the colonies, to whom it was thus intended to delegate extraordinary powers, Dr. Franklin thus expressed himself, in terms well worthy the attention of all ministers who are invested with the appointment of such functionaries : — ‘ Governors often come to the colonies merely to make fortunes, with which they intend to return to Britain ; are not always men of the best abilities or integrity ; have many of them no estates here, nor any natural connection with us, that should make them heartily concerned for our welfare ; and might possibly be fond of raising and keeping up more forces than necessary, from the profits accruing to

themselves, and to make provision for their friends and dependents.' The opposition which their project experienced, induced the British government to withdraw it, and the colonies and the mother country for some time longer acted together in union and harmony."

The French war, however, had occasioned a heavy increase of expense to the British government, and thus imposed the necessity for increased taxation. Under this necessity the ministers naturally looked to those for whose immediate benefit this increased expense had been incurred. The system which had been laid aside was renewed; and, on the motion of Mr. Grenville, the first commissioner of the treasury, in March 1765, a resolution passed, without much debate, importing that it would be proper to impose certain stamp duties in the colonies and plantations for the purpose of raising a revenue in America, payable into the British exchequer.

In the autumn of the previous year an act had been passed, authorising the trade between the North Americans and the French and Spanish colonies (which was inconsistent with the letter of the colonial charter), but loading it with such duties as amounted to a prohibition, and prescribing that all offenders against the regulations should be prosecuted in the court of admiralty, where they were deprived of a trial by jury; but the *gravamen* of this enactment was contained in the ominous language of its preamble, "Whereas it is just and necessary that a revenue be raised in America for defraying the expenses of defending, protecting,

and securing the same. We, the Commons, &c., towards raising the same, give and grant unto your Majesty," &c.

The intelligence of the passing of this measure drew from the colonists a series of petitions and remonstrances addressed to the parliament and the throne; but when in the following year the stamp act was passed, a determined spirit of opposition was excited in the American colonies. The assembly of Virginia was in session when the news of the passing of this measure arrived, and a set of resolutions was passed, from two of which the sense of that body may be clearly ascertained. They were as follows, "Resolved, That his Majesty's most liege people of this his most ancient colony, have enjoyed the right of being thus governed by their own assembly in the article of taxes and internal police, and that the same have never been forfeited, nor in any other way yielded up, but have been constantly recognised by the King and people of Great Britain. Resolved, therefore, that the general assembly of this colony, together with his Majesty, or his substitute, have in their representative capacity, the only exclusive right and power to lay taxes and impositions upon the inhabitants of this colony, and that every attempt to vest such a power in any person or persons whatsoever, other than the general assembly aforesaid, is illegal, unconstitutional, and unjust, and bears a manifest tendency to destroy British as well as American freedom."

That the sentiments of Colonel Washington were in perfect harmony with these resolutions,

will be clearly perceived from a private letter written to his wife's uncle in London, in September, 1765.

“At present,” he says, “there are few things among us that can be interesting to you. The Stamp Act, imposed on the colonies by the Parliament of Great Britain, engrosses the conversation of the speculative part of the colonists, who look upon this unconstitutional method of taxation, as a direful attack upon their liberties, and loudly exclaim against the violation. What may be the result of this, and of some other (I think I may add ill-judged) measures, I will not undertake to determine; but this I may venture to affirm, that the advantage accruing to the mother country will fall greatly short of the expectations of the ministry; for certain it is, that our whole substance already in a manner flows to Great Britain, and that whatsoever contributes to lessen our importations must be hurtful to her manufacturers. The eyes of our people already begin to be opened; and they will perceive, that many luxuries, for which we lavish our substance in Great Britain, can well be dispensed with, whilst the necessaries of life are mostly to be had within ourselves. This, consequently, will introduce frugality, and be a necessary incitement to industry. If Great Britain, therefore, loads her manufactures with heavy taxes, will it not facilitate such results? They will not compel us, I think, to give our money for their exports, whether we will or not; and I am certain, that none of their traders will part with them without a valuable consideration. Where, then, is the utility of these restrictions?”

“As to the Stamp Act, regarded in a single view, one and the first bad consequence attending it is, that our courts of judicature must inevitably be shut up ; for it is impossible, or next to impossible, under our present circumstances, that the act of Parliament can be complied with, were we ever so willing to enforce its execution. And, not to say (which alone would be sufficient) that we have not money to pay for the stamps, there are many other cogent reasons, which prove that it would be ineffectual. If a stop be put to our judicial proceedings, I fancy the merchants of Great Britain, trading to the colonies, will not be among the last to wish for a repeal of the act.”

On the passing of these resolutions, the governor dissolved the Virginian assembly, and writs for new elections were issued, but so entirely did the people take part with the opposition to the scheme of taxation proposed by ministers, that, in almost every instance, those members who had voted in favour of the above resolutions were re-elected, while those who had voted against them were generally excluded in favour of candidates who favoured the popular opinions*. The legislatures of several other colonies adopted the course which had been pursued by the Virginian assembly, and the representatives of Massachusetts in particular, originated a still more momentous innovation, by recommending a congress of deputies to meet at New York, in order to consult upon the new position in which the colonies at large were placed. It is here important to remark that in this important instance, as in every other, the

* Judge Marshall's Life of Washington.

system of *representation* was distinctly recognised and acted upon, because this principle formed the precise point of divergence from which Great Britain and her colonies separated for ever. All the American states acceded to the proposal of Massachusetts, with the exception of New Hampshire, which concurred in the general opposition, and of Virginia and North Carolina, whose legislative assemblies were not in session at the time.

In England the obnoxious measure did not pass without an animated opposition. The celebrated Charles Townsend is said to have concluded his speech in support of the bill in the following words:—

“ And now will these Americans—children planted by our care, nourished up by our indulgence, till they are grown to a degree of strength and opulence, and protected by our arms—will they grudge to contribute their mite to relieve us from the heavy weight of that burden which we lie under? ’ To this invidious appeal to the pride and the prejudices of the members of the House of Commons, Colonel Barré thus energetically replied:—‘ They planted by your care! No! your oppressions planted them in America. They fled from your tyranny to a then uncultivated and inhospitable country, where they exposed themselves to almost all the hardships to which human nature is liable, and, among others, to the cruelty of a savage foe, the most subtle, and, I will take upon me to say, the most formidable of any people upon the face of God’s earth; and yet, actuated by principles of true English liberty, they met all

hardships with pleasure, compared with those they suffered in their own country, from the hands of those who should have been their friends. They nourished up by your indulgence! they grew by your neglect of them. As soon as you began to care for them, that care was exercised in sending persons to rule them in one department and another, who were, perhaps, the deputies of deputies to some members of this house, sent to spy out their liberties, to misrepresent their actions, and to prey upon them—men whose behaviour, on many occasions, has caused the blood of those sons of liberty to recoil within them—men promoted to the highest seats of justice; some who, to my knowledge, were glad, by going to a foreign country, to escape being brought to the bar of a court of justice in their own. They protected by your arms! they have nobly taken up arms in your defence, have exerted their valour, amidst their constant and laborious industry, for the defence of a country whose frontier was drenched in blood, while its interior parts yielded all its little savings to your emolument. And, believe me, remember I this day told you so, that same spirit of freedom which actuated that people at first, will accompany them still; but prudence forbids me to explain myself further. God knows I do not at this time speak from any motives of party heat; what I deliver are the genuine sentiments of my heart. However superior to me, in general knowledge and experience, the respectable body of this House may be, yet I claim to know more of America than most of you, having seen and been conversant with that country. The people, I believe, are as

truly loyal as any subjects the king has, but a people jealous of their liberties, and who will vindicate them, if ever they should be violated. But the subject is too delicate—I will say no more.'

"In the House of Lords the Bill met with no opposition; and on the 22nd of March it received the royal assent."

CHAPTER VII.

Effects of the Stamp Act in England and America—Dr. Johnson's "Taxation no Tyranny" examined — Lord Chatham's Opposition to the Stamp Act—Stamp Act repealed—Opinions of the Americans and of Washington on the Repeal—Further Measures for taxing America —Correspondence of Washington and Mason on these Measures.

UNHAPPILY for the peaceful operation of the Stamp Act, a long interval was permitted by the British government to intervene between the passing of the measure and its actually taking effect. This interval was not wasted. Combinations against its execution were everywhere formed. It was resolved to dispense with stamps upon the various instruments to the validity of which they had previously been considered necessary, to abandon litigation for the settlement of disputes, and, worst of all, to abandon, as far as possible, the importation of British manufactures. The day on which the Stamp Act was to come into force was ushered in by the general tolling of bells, and by other demonstration of popular regret.

Meanwhile, in England, scarcely less concern was excited by this unfortunate measure. The principle upon which it proceeded, that of the existence of a right in the parent state to tax their colonies without their consent, now became the theme of much discussion. In Parliament opinion was much divided. And in the country

the differences of commercial interest occasioned a corresponding diversity of sentiment upon this point ;—while many advocated the taxation of America in order to divide the weight which pressed heavily at home, the merchants foresaw in the non-importation system adopted by the colonists, the ruin of American commerce, and thus an indirect, but most serious eventual loss to the British Exchequer.

But apart from its commercial bearings, this question of the abstract right claimed by Great Britain was extensively discussed among the moral and political philosophers in whom this eventful age was unusually fertile. Among these, Dr. Johnson may be considered as the champion of the right of taxation. In 1775, he published his “Taxation no Tyranny,” in which all admissible arguments on that side of the question, together with some others, are urged with a degree of ingenuity, satire, and force of language which is scarcely exceeded in any production of his pen. Considering this as a kind of representative exposition of the notions of one of the two large classes which then divided between them a large portion of the civilised world, it may not be inappropriate here to afford a moment’s attention to it. First, then, with respect to the arguments for the expediency of taxing America, which was loudly urged by British merchants. Dr. Johnson dismisses it in the following manner :—“There will always be a part, and always a very large part of every community that have no care but for themselves, and whose care for themselves reaches little farther than impatience of immediate pain, and eagerness for the nearest good. The blind are said to feel

with peculiar nicety. They who look but little into futurity have, perhaps, the quickest sensation of the present. A merchant's desire is not of glory, but of gain; not of public wealth, but of private emolument; he is therefore rarely to be consulted about war and peace, or any designs of wide extent and distant consequence.

“ Yet this, like other general characters, will sometimes fail. The traders of Birmingham have rescued themselves from all imputation of narrow selfishness, by a manly recommendation to Parliament of the rights and liberties of their native country.”

This is not the place for controversy; but it still seems natural to notice this as a specimen of the manner in which this unhappy contest was conducted on the part of Great Britain. It will be obvious to every reader that this passage may be literally translated in the following manner:—
“ Those merchants who differ with me are shortsighted, not to say blind, and are not to be consulted about war and peace; whereas those magnanimous Birmingham gentlemen who concur with me, deserve to be consulted in all state emergencies, and to be eulogised in words of ten syllables into the bargain.”

With regard to the abstract right of the mother country to impose taxes on her colonial dependencies, Dr. Johnson thus continues:—“ A tax is a payment exacted by authority from part of the community for the benefit of the whole. From whom, and in what proportion, such payment shall be required, and to what uses it shall be applied, *those only are to judge to whom government is*

intrusted. In the British dominions taxes are apportioned, levied, and appropriated by the states assembled in parliament.

“Of every empire, all the *subordinate* communities are liable to taxation, because they all share the benefits of government, and therefore ought all to furnish their proportion of the expense.”

Whatever exceptions may be taken against the definition with which this passage opens, there is nothing in the subsequent statements which favours the argument they were adduced to support. In short, the language by implication recognises the very principle disputed—that the obligation to pay taxes is inseparable from the privilege of representation.

As the argument proceeds, however, and draws to its crisis, a very different position is maintained. “Our colonies,” he says, “however distant, have been hitherto treated as constituent parts of the British empire. The inhabitants incorporated by English laws, *are entitled to all the rights of Englishmen.* They are governed by English laws, entitled to English dignities, regulated by English counsels, and protected by English arms; and it seems to follow by consequence, not easily avoided, that they are subject to English government, and chargeable by English taxation.”

Now, there can be no objection to put aside, for argument's sake, the claim which a numerous and thriving colony might urge to political independence, and to the right of forming such laws for themselves as may be required by circumstances precisely *opposite* to those of the distant mother country. These claims may be set aside, and the conclusion arrived at may be admitted to follow

from the first position. Still the whole train of reasoning must surely be vitiated by the fact, that incomparably the dearest of all rights—that from which all others emanate, was not possessed by the colonists; namely, the right of representation.

The only conceivable reply to this is found in the following argument, with which the case on both sides may close.

“They say,” says Dr. Johnson, “that by such emigration, they by no means forfeited, surrendered, or lost any of those rights; but, that ‘they were, and their descendants now are, entitled to the exercise and enjoyment of all such of them as their local and other circumstances enable them to exercise and enjoy.’

“That they who form a settlement by a lawful charter, having committed no crime, forfeit no privileges will be readily confessed; but what they do not forfeit by any judicial sentence, they may lose by natural effects. As a man can be but in one place at once, he cannot have the advantages of multiplied residence. He that will enjoy the brightness of the sunshine, must quit the coolness of the shade. He who goes voluntarily to America, cannot complain of losing what he leaves in Europe. He perhaps had a right to vote for a Knight, or Burgess,—by crossing the Atlantic, he has not nullified his right; but he has made its exertion no longer possible. By his own choice, he has left a country where he had a vote, and little property, for another where he has great property, but no vote. But as this preference was deliberate and unconstrained, he is still ‘concerned in the government of himself;’ he has reduced himself

from a voter to one of the innumerable multitude that have no vote. He has truly 'ceded his right,' but he is still governed by his own consent; because he has consented to throw his atom of interest into the general mass of the community. Of the consequences of his own act, he has no cause to complain; he has chosen, or intended to choose, the greater good; he is represented as he himself desired in the general representation."

Now if this reasoning were designed simply to reconcile an individual emigrant to the loss of his franchise owing to the inadmissibility of votes by proxy, it might be deemed a rational remonstrance; but if it be addressed to the remote descendants of emigrants composing a populous and rapidly increasing nation, with vast commercial interests and political relations, thousands of miles from the mother country, and all whose social institutions are of necessity foreign and peculiar, it appears to be little better than trifling.

Political changes in England soon brought that to pass which reason and argument were unable to accomplish. The Grenville party was succeeded by a cabinet unfavourable to the further prosecution of the plan of raising a revenue from America. In the debate upon the address to his Majesty at the opening of the next session, the claims of the colonies were taken up by one of the most illustrious political philosophers of which this or any other country has ever boasted;—a man whose benevolence was as boundless as his genius; a man distinguished by equal profundity as a statesman and integrity as a minister; whose excellence in both respects was dependent upon the fact that all his opinions and conduct were based upon the

strictest principles of equity, and who possessed the most extraordinary facility of referring back to these fundamental principles all the details of politics. It was the immortal Lord Chatham who now came forward as the champion of the rights of America, and who ultimately died in their defence.

In the course of the debate on the motion for the address, his Lordship, then Mr. Pitt, condemned in the most explicit manner the act for collecting stamps in America; and strenuously declared his conviction that Parliament had no right to tax the colonies.

“‘It is a long time, Mr. Speaker,’ said he, ‘since I have attended in Parliament. When the resolution was taken in the house to tax America, I was ill in bed. If I could have endured to have been carried in my bed, so great was the agitation of my mind for the consequences, I would have solicited some kind hand to have laid me down on this floor, to have borne my testimony against it. It is now an act that has passed; I would speak with decency of every act of this house, but I must beg the indulgence of the house to speak of it with freedom. I hope a day may be soon appointed to consider the state of the nation with respect to America. I hope gentlemen will come to this debate with all the temper and impartiality that his Majesty recommends, and the importance of the subject requires—a subject of greater importance than ever engaged the attention of this House, that subject only excepted, when, nearly a century ago, it was the question whether you yourselves were to be bound or free. In the mean time, as I cannot depend upon health for any future day, such is the

nature of my infirmities, I will beg to say a few words at present, leaving the justice, the equity, the policy, the expediency of the act to another time. I will only speak to one point—a point which seems not to have been generally understood—I mean to the right. Some gentlemen seem to have considered it as a point of honour. If gentlemen consider it in that light, they leave all measures of right and wrong, to follow a delusion that may lead to destruction. It is my opinion that this kingdom has no right to lay a tax upon the colonies. At the same time I assert the authority of this kingdom over the colonies to be sovereign and supreme in every circumstance of government and legislation whatsoever. They are the subjects of this kingdom, equally entitled with yourselves to all the natural rights of mankind, and the peculiar privileges of Englishmen. Equally bound by its laws, and equally participating of the constitution of this free country, the Americans are the sons—not the bastards of England. Taxation is no part of the governing or legislative power. The taxes are a voluntary gift and grant of the Commons alone. In legislation the three estates of the realm are alike concerned; but the concurrence of the peers and the crown to a tax is only necessary to close with the form of a law. The gift and grant is of the Commons alone. In ancient days the crown, the barons, and the clergy possessed the lands. In those days the barons and the clergy gave and granted to the crown. They gave and granted what was their own. At present, and since the discovery of America, the Commons are become the proprietors of the land. The crown has divested itself of its great estates. The church (God bless it!) has but

a pittance. The property of the Lords, compared with that of the Commons, is as a drop of water in the ocean ; and this house represents those Commons, the proprietors of the lands ; and those proprietors virtually represent the rest of the inhabitants. When, therefore, in this house we give and grant, we give and grant what is our own. But in an American tax what do we do ? ‘ We, your Majesty’s Commons of Great Britain give and grant to your Majesty’—what?—our own property?—No ! We give and grant to your Majesty the property of your Majesty’s Commons of America ! It is an absurdity in terms.’ ‘ There is,’ said Mr. Pitt, towards the close of his speech—‘ there is an idea in some, that the Commons are virtually represented in this House. I would fain know by whom an American is represented here ? Is he represented by any knight of the shire in any county in this kingdom ? Would to God that respectable representation was augmented to a greater number ! Or will you tell him that he is represented by any representative of a borough—a borough which, perhaps, no man ever saw. This is what is called the rotten part of the constitution. It cannot continue a century—if it does not drop it must be amputated. The idea of a virtual representation of America in this house is the most contemptible idea that ever entered into the head of a man.’ Mr. Pitt concluded by declaring it as his opinion, that whilst the Americans were possessed of the constitutional right to tax themselves, Great Britain, as the supreme governing and legislative power, had always bound the colonies by her laws, by her regulations and restrictions in trade, in navigation, in manufactures, in every thing

except that of taking their money out of their pockets without their consent. Of this broad assertion, of the extent of British power over the colonies, Mr. Grenville, the patron of the Stamp Act, took advantage, and maintained that there was no difference in principle between the right to impose external and internal taxation. He asserted that the protection from time to time afforded to America by Britain was a just ground of claim to obedience on the part of the latter from the former, and asked when America was emancipated from the allegiance which she owed to the parent state? Provoked by Mr. Grenville's sophistry, and irritated by his insolence of tone and manner, Mr. Pitt gave utterance to the following declaration—a declaration, no doubt, well calculated to animate the spirit of freedom on the other side of the Atlantic. ‘The honourable gentleman tells us that America is obstinate; America is almost in open rebellion. I REJOICE THAT AMERICA HAS RESISTED. Three millions of people, so dead to all the feelings of liberty, as voluntarily to submit to be slaves, would have been fit instruments to make slaves of the rest of their fellow subjects.’”

A few days after the delivery of this speech Dr. Franklin, the celebrated American philosopher, was examined at the bar of the House of Commons respecting the state of the American colonies and the probable effect of the stamp duty upon the inhabitants. This examination elicited all the profound political knowledge and practical wisdom of which his name has almost become the proverb. It concluded with the following questions and

replies:—*Q.* “What used to be the pride of the Americans?—*A.* To indulge in the fashions and manufactures of Great Britain. *Q.* What is now their pride?—*A.* To wear their old clothes over again till they can make new ones.”

At length, however, the complaints of the British manufacturers, whose commerce was materially injured by the non-importation system, now generally adopted in America, concurred with those of the colonists, and ministers were compelled to yield.

“Before the examination of Dr. Franklin, indeed, viz. on the 21st of January, 1766, a motion had, under their auspices, been made in the Commons and passed in a committee of the whole House to the following effect:—‘That it is the opinion of the committee, that the House be moved, that leave be given to bring in a bill to repeal an act passed in the last session of parliament entitled ‘An Act for granting and applying certain Stamp Duties, and other Duties in the British Colonies and Plantations in America towards farther defraying the expenses of defending, protecting, and securing the same, and for amending such parts of the several acts of parliament relating to the trade and revenues of the said colonies and plantations, as direct the manner of determining and recovering the penalties and forfeitures therein mentioned.’”

On the 24th of February following, these resolutions were confirmed by the passing of a similar one, which was guarded by a “Declaratory Act” passed in conjunction with it, asserting “that the Parliament have, and of right ought to have, power

to bind the colonies in all cases whatsoever." The submission to this declaration in America is only another instance of the looseness with which the rights and privileges of the colonies were defined and understood. Judge Marshall states that, notwithstanding this unpalatable ingredient in the act, the joy of America on receiving the intelligence was unbounded. The assertion of the abstract principle of right gave them but little concern, because they considered it merely as a *salvo* for the wounded pride of the nation, and believed confidently that no future attempt would be made to reduce it to practice. The highest honours were everywhere decreed to those members of parliament who had been strenuous in obtaining a repeal of the obnoxious act, and in Virginia an act passed the house of burgesses for erecting a statue to his Majesty, as an acknowledgment of their high sense of his attention to the rights and petitions of his people.

The opinions of Washington on this occasion may be perceived from a letter written at the time, in which, after showing the unhappy consequences which would have followed from the prosecution of the designs of the Grenville government, he says—

“Those, therefore, who wisely foresaw such an event, and were instrumental in procuring the repeal of the act, are, in my opinion, deservedly entitled to the thanks of the well-wishers to Britain and her colonies, and must reflect with pleasure, that, through their means, many scenes of confusion and distress have been prevented. Mine they accordingly have, and always shall have, for their opposition to any act of oppression; and that act

could be looked upon in no other light by every person, who would view it in its proper colours.

“ I could wish it were in my power to congratulate you on the success of having the commercial system of these colonies put upon a more enlarged and extensive footing, than it is ; because I am well satisfied, that it would ultimately redound to the advantage of the mother country, so long as the colonies pursue trade and agriculture, and would be an effectual let to manufacturing among them. The money, which they raise, would centre in Great Britain, as certainly as the needle will settle to the pole. I am,” &c.

It may safely be asserted that the union of the colonies and the mother country was never more complete than at this moment. In the joy of the colonists on the retractation of the sentiments and designs indicated in the stamp act, all past jealousies were merged. This disposition, however, was not universal in the American colonies. The injuries which had been inflicted by government fell most heavily on the province of Massachusetts ; and the communications made to ministers by the inhabitants of this province were perhaps among the chief causes of the revival of those measures which had been reluctantly abandoned.

In 1767, a bill was brought forward by Charles Townsend, the chancellor of the exchequer, which was quickly passed into a law for granting duties in the British colonies on glass, paper, tea, &c. This injudicious proceeding rekindled the flame of resentment throughout the provinces. In their estimation, it proved that the declaratory act was not intended to be a dead letter, and it gave

rise to bold and animated discussions as to the distinction between tax bills and bills for the regulation of trade. To add to the alarm of the colonists, a board of commissioners of customs was established at Boston, which step convinced them that the British government intended to harass them with a multiplicity of fiscal oppressions. They therefore again had recourse to petitions, remonstrances, and non-importation agreements. The seizure of the sloop *Liberty*, belonging to Mr. Hancock, a popular leader, for an infringement of the revenue laws, incited the populace of Boston to renewed acts of violence, which drove the commissioners of the customs to take shelter in Castle William. To suppress this spirit of insubordination, his Majesty's ministers stationed some armed vessels in the harbour, and quartered two regiments of foot in the town of Boston. The intention of the British government to send this force to Boston having been announced, the select men of ninety-six towns of the state of Massachusetts, met at Faneuil hall, in the town; but this assembly, which had excited great alarm among the friends of government, merely recommended moderate measures, and then dissolved itself. The day after the breaking up of this convention, the troops arrived, and landed without opposition under the protection of the guns of the armed vessels in the harbour.

The intelligence of the refractory spirit thus manifested by the inhabitants of Boston, produced such irritation in the British parliament, that in February, 1769, both Houses concurred in an address to his Majesty, prompting him to vigorous measures against all persons guilty of what they

were pleased to denominate treasonable acts; and beseeching him, in pursuance of the powers contained in an obsolete statute of the 35th of Henry VIII., to seize the offenders, and cause them to be tried by a special commission within the realm of Great Britain. This imprudent suggestion was encountered by strong resolutions on the part of the provincial assemblies; and the colonists again had recourse to non-importation agreements, and, in some instances, sent back to Great Britain cargoes of goods which had actually arrived. Thus the distresses of the British manufacturers were renewed; and ministers were induced, by their earnest remonstrances, to repeal all the newly imposed duties, except that on tea. This reservation being a practical assertion of the right of Parliament to impose internal taxes on the American States, was very odious to the colonists. They however, relaxed their associations so far as to allow the importation of all articles except tea, the use of which commodity they forebore, or supplied themselves with it by smuggling."

The views of Colonel Washington at this juncture were most distinct and decisive. In a letter addressed to his intimate friend and neighbour, Mr. Mason, he states them at large.

"At a time, when our lordly masters in Great Britain will be satisfied with nothing less than the deprivation of American freedom, it seems highly necessary that something should be done to avert the stroke, and maintain the liberty, which we have derived from our ancestors. But the manner of doing it, to answer the purpose effectually, is the point in question.

“That no man should scruple, or hesitate a moment, to use arms in defence of so valuable a blessing, is clearly my opinion. Yet arms, I would beg leave to add, should be the last resource, the *dernier ressort*. We have already, it is said, proved the inefficacy of addresses to the throne, and remonstrances to Parliament. How far, then, their attention to our rights and privileges is to be awakened or alarmed, by starving their trade and manufactures, remains to be tried.

“The northern colonies, it appears, are endeavouring to adopt this scheme. In my opinion it is a good one, and must be attended with salutary effects, provided it can be carried pretty generally into execution. But to what extent it is practicable to do so, I will not take upon me to determine. That there will be a difficulty attending the execution of it everywhere, from clashing interests, and selfish, designing men, ever attentive to their own gain, and watchful of every turn, that can assist their lucrative views, cannot be denied; and in the tobacco colonies, where the trade is so diffused, and in a manner wholly conducted by factors for their principals at home [in England], these difficulties are certainly enhanced, but I think not insurmountably increased, if the gentlemen in their several counties will be at some pains to explain matters to the people, and stimulate them to cordial agreements to purchase none but certain enumerated articles out of any of the stores after a definite period, and neither import nor purchase any themselves. This, if it should not effectually withdraw the factors from their importations, would at least make them extremely cautious in doing it, as the prohibited goods could be vended to none but the

non-associators, or those who would pay no regard to their association ; both of whom ought to be stigmatised, and made the objects of public reproach.

“ The more I consider a scheme of this sort, the more ardently I wish success to it, because I think there are private as well as public advantages to result from it,—the former certain, however precarious the other may prove. In respect to the latter, I have always thought, that by virtue of the same power, which assumes the right of taxation, the Parliament may attempt at least to restrain our manufactures, especially those of a public nature, the same equity and justice prevailing in the one case as the other, it being no greater hardship to forbid my manufacturing, than it is to order me to buy goods loaded with duties, for the express purpose of raising a revenue. But as a measure of this sort would be an additional exertion of arbitrary power, we cannot be placed in a worse condition, I think, by putting it to the test.

“ On the other hand, that the colonies are considerably indebted to Great Britain, is a truth universally acknowledged. That many families are reduced almost, if not quite, to penury and want by the low ebb of their fortunes, and that estates are daily selling for the discharge of debts, the public papers furnish too many melancholy proofs. That a scheme of this sort will contribute more effectually than any other that can be devised to extricate the country from the distress it at present labours under, I most firmly believe, if it can be generally adopted. And I can see but one class of people, the merchants excepted, who will not, or ought not, to wish well to the scheme,

namely, they who live genteelly and hospitably on clear estates. Such as these, were they not to consider the valuable object in view, and the good of others, might think it hard to be curtailed in their living and enjoyments. As to the penurious man, he would thereby save his money and his credit, having the best plea for doing that, which before, perhaps, he had the most violent struggles to refrain from doing. The extravagant and expensive man has the same good plea to retrench his expenses. He would be furnished with a pretext to live within bounds, and embrace it. Prudence dictated economy before, but his resolution was too weak to put it in practice; 'For how can I,' says he, 'who have lived in such and such a manner, change my method? I am ashamed to do it, and, besides, such an alteration in the system of my living will create suspicions of the decay of my fortune, and such a thought the world must not harbour.' He continues his course, till at last his estate comes to an end, a sale of it being the consequence of his perseverance in error. This I am satisfied is the way, that many, who have set out in the wrong track, have reasoned, till ruin has stared them in the face. And in respect to the needy man, he is only left in the same situation that he was found in,—better, I may say, because, as he judges from comparison, his condition is amended in proportion as it approaches nearer to those above him.

“Upon the whole, therefore, I think the scheme a good one, and that it ought to be tried here, with such alterations as our circumstances render absolutely necessary. But in what manner to begin the work, is a matter worthy of consideration.

Whether it can be attempted with propriety or efficacy, further than a communication of sentiments to one another, before May, when the Court and Assembly will meet at Williamsburg, and a uniform plan can be concerted, and sent into the different counties to operate at the same time and in the same manner everywhere, is a thing upon which I am somewhat in doubt, and I should be glad to know your opinion. I am," &c.

The intentions and feelings of the colonists at large are expressed in Mr. Mason's reply.

"I entirely agree with you, that no regular plan of the sort proposed can be entered into here, before the meeting of the General Court at least, if not of the Assembly. In the mean time it may be necessary to publish something preparatory to it in our gazettes, to warn the people of the impending danger, and induce them the more readily and cheerfully to concur in the proper measures to avert it; and something of this sort I had begun, but am unluckily stopped by a disorder, which affects my head and eyes. As soon as I am able, I shall resume it, and then write you more fully, or endeavour to see you. In the mean time pray commit to writing such hints as may occur.

"Our all is at stake, and the little conveniences and comforts of life, when set in competition with our liberty, ought to be rejected, not with reluctance, but with pleasure. Yet it is plain, that in the tobacco colonies we cannot at present confine our importations within such narrow bounds, as the northern colonies. A plan of this kind, to be practicable, must be adapted to our circumstances; for if not steadily executed, it had better have

remained unattempted. We may retrench all manner of superfluities, finery of all descriptions, and confine ourselves to linens, woollens, &c., not exceeding a certain price. It is amazing how much this practice, if adopted in all the colonies, would lessen the American imports, and distress the various traders and manufacturers in Great Britain.

“This would awaken their attention. They would see, they would feel, the oppressions we groan under, and exert themselves to procure us redress. This once obtained, we should no longer discontinue our importations, confining ourselves still not to import any article, that should hereafter be taxed by act of Parliament for raising a revenue in America; for, however singular I may be in my opinion, I am thoroughly convinced, that, justice and harmony happily restored, it is not the interest of these colonies to refuse British manufactures. Our supplying our mother country with gross materials, and taking her manufactures in return, is the true chain of connexion between us. These are the bands, which, if not broken by oppression, must long hold us together, by maintaining a constant reciprocation of interest. Proper caution should, therefore, be used in drawing up the proposed plan of association. It may not be amiss to let the ministry understand, that, until we obtain a redress of grievances, we will withhold from them our commodities, and particularly refrain from making tobacco, by which the revenue would lose fifty times more than all their oppressions could raise here.

“Had the hint, which I have given with regard to the taxation of goods imported into America, been

thought of by our merchants before the repeal of the Stamp Act, the late American revenue acts would probably never have been attempted."

A striking instance of the energy with which Washington adhered to the principles which were now generally professed by his countrymen, is found in an extract from a letter to his London correspondent in sending out his customary orders.

"You will perceive, in looking over the several invoices, that some of the goods there required are upon condition that the act of Parliament imposing a duty on tea, paper, &c., for the purpose of raising a revenue in America, is totally repealed, and I beg the favour of you to be governed strictly thereby, as it will not be in my power to receive any articles contrary to our non-importation agreement, which I have subscribed, and shall religiously adhere to, and should, if it were, as I could wish it to be, ten times as strict."

Nor were these sentiments and intentions confined to the eminent statesmen of America. The house of representatives in Massachusetts addressed some powerful appeals against the measures of government both to their agents in London and to some of the most able members of Parliament. These all breathe a spirit of the warmest loyalty, while they remonstrate in the most earnest tone against the recent acts of the British Parliament. The other states followed the example of Massachusetts, and the mother country was at once put into such entire possession of the feelings and designs of the American colonies that the plea of ignorance can never be urged to excuse the ill-omened policy which she subsequently pursued.

CHAPTER VIII.

General State of Feeling in America—Addresses to Lord Shelburne and His Majesty—Riots in Massachusetts—Convention from the Provincial Towns—Military Force arrives in Boston—Disputes of the Citizens with the Military—Obnoxious Acts of Government—Remonstrances of the Colonists, and partial Redress of Grievances—Increased Outrages in Boston—Boston Port Bill—Effects of it on the Americans.

THE dispute between England and America was now assuming daily a more alarming aspect. The renewed attempt of government to impose internal taxes had again awakened the mortification and resentment which had been allayed by the repeal of the Stamp Act. The province of Massachusetts, in particular, adopted prompt and vigorous measures to counteract the designs of ministers; and, for this purpose, addressed the most powerful appeals to various influential members of the British Parliament. In these addresses, however, as in the universal tone of American politics at this time, nothing is more manifest than the repugnance of the colonists to a separation from the mother country. In fact their addresses, petitions, and remonstrances were as indicative of devoted loyalty to their sovereign and attachment to the constitution as of their determination to preserve their own rights and liberties.

In a letter to the Earl of Shelburne, then secre

tary of state, which was signed by the speaker on behalf of the house of representatives of Massachusetts, they lay down with great clearness the principle of their complaints. "It is the glory," they write, "of the British constitution, that it has its foundation in the laws of God and nature. It is essentially a right that a man shall quietly enjoy and have the disposal of his own property; this right is engrafted into the British constitution and is familiar to the American subjects, and your lordships will judge whether any necessity can render it just and equitable, in the nature of things, that the supreme legislature of the empire should impose duties, subsidies, talliages, and taxes, internal or external, for the sole purpose of raising a revenue upon subjects that are not, and cannot, considering their local circumstances, by any possibility be equally represented; and, consequently, whose consent cannot be had in Parliament.

"The security of right and property is the great end of government, surely then such measures as tend to render right and property precarious tend to destroy both property and government, for these must stand or fall together. Property is admitted to have existence in the savage state of nature, and if it be necessary for the support of savage life, it becomes by no means less so in civil society. The House entreats your lordships to consider whether a colonist can be conceived to have any property which he may call his own if it may be granted away by any other body without his consent, and they submit to your lordships' judgment whether this was not actually done when the act for granting to his Majesty certain duties on paper, glass, and other articles, for the sole and express purpose of raising a revenue in America, was made."

Shortly after this letter an address was agreed upon to his Majesty urging similar arguments; and also a circular letter, stating the proceedings and views of their own body, to the assemblies of the respective provinces, which was received with universal approbation. Nor was this approbation in any degree diminished by a letter from the Earl of Hillsborough, the secretary for the colonies, addressed to the governors of the provinces, in which he designates the circular letter of Massachusetts as one of a most dangerous and factious tendency. His lordship's letter concludes with the following direction:—

“If, notwithstanding the apprehensions which may justly be entertained of the ill consequence of a continuance of this factious spirit, which seems to have influenced the resolutions of the assembly at the conclusion of the last session, the new assembly should refuse to comply with his Majesty's reasonable expectations, it is the King's pleasure that you immediately dissolve them.”

Upon this a letter to his lordship was agreed to by the assembly of Massachusetts, in which they defend their conduct in manly but becoming language; they boldly intimate their conviction that the royal mind had been poisoned by false representations of their disaffection. After stating their grief at receiving repeated censures, “not from ministers of state alone, but from Majesty itself,” they add:—

“The house humbly rely on the royal clemency that to petition his Majesty will not be deemed by him to be inconsistent with a respect to the British constitution, as settled at the revolution by William.

the Third; that to acquaint their fellow subjects involved in the same distress, of their having so done in full hopes of success, even if they had invited the union of all America in one joint supplication, would not be discountenanced by our gracious sovereign as a measure of an inflammatory nature; that when your lordship shall in justice lay a true statement of these matters before his Majesty he will no longer consider them as tending to create unwarrantable combinations, or excite an unjustifiable opposition to the constitutional authority of Parliament; that he will then truly discern who are of that desperate faction which is continually disturbing the public tranquillity; and, that while his arm is extended for the protection of his distressed and injured subjects, he will frown upon all those who, to gratify their own passions, have dared to attempt to deceive him."

While the large majority of the colonists were only led by the acts of government to the adoption of these constitutional measures, there were some who were incited by them to open insubordination. These appearances first showed themselves in Boston, where some revenue officers who had seized a sloop were beaten off by a mob, who completed their outrage by burning in triumph a boat belonging to the collectors of the customs. In consequence of this, and some similar occurrences, representations were made by the governor to ministers, stating the necessity of stationing a military force in the province for the protection of such as were employed in collecting the revenue, and preserving the public peace. Orders were accordingly given to General Gage, and two regiments were detached for the purpose.

Upon the first intimation of the probability of this event the governor was petitioned to convene the general assembly; which petition was only answered by a statement of his inability to convoke it without the express direction of his Majesty. It is scarcely necessary to remark that this reply, together with numerous instances of similar conduct on the part of the governors of the provinces, was sufficient of itself to show to the colonists at large the serious inconvenience arising from their connection with a distant government, and to originate a wish for political independence. The committee of the inhabitants of Boston, who had resolved on the petition, issued a number of resolutions in consequence of its rejection, indicative of those feelings which had now become prevalent in the colonies. In these they urged the compliance of all with an ancient law of the province binding every householder to provide himself with a complete stand of arms; and requested that the town would select from them a body of committee-men to meet as occasion might require, with others similarly chosen from the other towns of the province.

This latter recommendation was generally acted on, and a convention assembled, which, while it was regarded with all the deference paid to the representatives of the provinces, acted with unexpected moderation. They disclaimed all authority to pass acts, and merely pretended to the character of individuals appointed to consult on the measures calculated to secure the peace and good order of the province. After recording a temperate expression of their sentiments, and urging on their fellow citizens a patient submission to the laws, they dis-

solved themselves and retired to their respective homes.

The day before the convention rose, two regiments arrived under convoy before Boston. It had been ordained by act of Parliament that no British troops should be quartered in Boston unless the castle, which was used as their ordinary barracks, were full. On this occasion, however, General Gage had been informed that the inhabitants were in a state of open revolt, and therefore ordered that the military should debark and take up their quarters in the town. They accordingly landed under cover of the cannon of their ships, and marched with loaded muskets and fixed bayonets, to the edifice where the representatives usually assembled, and which had most injudiciously been appointed by the governor for their occupation.

The disaffection of the inhabitants of Boston was increased tenfold by this unfortunate measure. They saw the chamber of their representatives filled with soldiery, and guarded by cannon. They had the annoyance of being challenged as they passed and re-passed, and their ears were offended by martial music during divine service. Thus the antipathy of the townsmen to the military was daily on the increase.

Meanwhile, the British Parliament passed a series of resolutions equally unpalatable to the Bostonians. They condemned the convention in Boston and its resolutions as subversive of his Majesty's government, and ordered that information should be transmitted to his Majesty of all treasons committed in Massachusetts since the year 1767, that the authors might be brought to trial and punishment within the realm of Great

Britain. Not long after the passing of these resolutions, the assembly of Virginia was convened by Lord Bottetourt, the governor of the colony, a nobleman of popular manners and conciliatory character. The assembly at once recorded their sentiments respecting the acts of the British Parliament with moderation and firmness. They asserted the exclusive power to impose taxes upon that province; and their undoubted right to petition for redress of grievances, and to obtain the concurrence of other colonies in such petitions. They also resolved that all persons charged with the commission of any offence within that colony, were entitled to a trial before the tribunals of that country, and that to seize such persons and transport them beyond sea for trial, was a violation of the rights of British subjects, and of the invaluable privilege of being tried by a jury from the neighbourhood, and of producing witnesses on the trial.

Entertaining these opinions, they, in May 1769, agreed on an address to his Majesty, which as showing the disposition of a colony which took a most active interest in the contest with Great Britain, and in which Washington was a leading representative, deserves to be recorded in this place. It was as follows:—

“To the King’s most excellent Majesty,

“The humble address of his dutiful and loyal subjects of the house of Burgesses, of his Majesty’s ancient colony of Virginia, met in general assembly.

“May it please your Majesty,

“We, your Majesty’s most loyal, dutiful; and affectionate subjects, the house of Burgesses of

this your Majesty's ancient colony of Virginia, now met in general assembly, beg leave in the humblest manner to assure your Majesty that your faithful subjects of this colony, ever distinguished by their loyalty and firm attachment to your Majesty and your royal ancestors, far from countenancing traitors, treasons, or misprisions of treasons, are ready at any time to sacrifice our lives and fortunes in defence of your Majesty's sacred person and government. It is with the deepest concern and most heartfelt grief, that your Majesty's dutiful subjects of this colony find that their loyalty has been traduced, and that those measures which a just regard for the British constitution (dearer to them than life) made necessary duties, have been represented as rebellious attacks upon your Majesty's government.

“When we consider that by the established laws and constitution of this colony, the most ample provision is made for apprehending and punishing all those who shall dare to engage in any treasonable practices against your Majesty, or disturb the tranquillity of government, we cannot without horror think of the new, unusual, and permit us with all humility to add, unconstitutional and illegal mode recommended to your Majesty, of seizing and carrying beyond sea the inhabitants of America suspected of any crime, and trying such persons in any other manner than by the ancient and long established course of proceeding. For how truly deplorable must be the case of a wretched American, who, having incurred the displeasure of any one in power, is dragged from his native home and his dearest domestic connections, thrown into a prison not to await his trial

before a court, jury or judge, from a knowledge of whom he is encouraged to hope for speedy justice, but to exchange his imprisonment in his own country for fetters among strangers! conveyed to a distant land, where no friend no relation will alleviate his distresses or minister to his necessities, and where no witnesses can be found to testify his innocence; shunned by the reputable and honest, and consigned to the society and converse of the wretched and the abandoned, he can only pray that he may soon end his misery with his life.

“Truly alarmed at the fatal tendency of those pernicious counsels, and with hearts filled with anguish by such dangerous invasions of our dearest privileges, we presume to prostrate ourselves at the foot of your royal throne, beseeching your Majesty, as our King and Father, to avert from your faithful and loyal subjects of America those miseries which must necessarily be the consequence of such measures. After expressing our firm confidence of your royal wisdom and goodness, permit us to assure your Majesty that the most fervent prayers of your people of this colony, are daily addressed to the Almighty that your Majesty's reign may be long and prosperous over Great Britain and all your dominions, and that after death your Majesty may taste the fullest fruition of eternal bliss, and that a descendant of your illustrious house may reign over the extended British empire until time shall be no more.”

Intelligence of these proceedings having reached the governor, he suddenly dissolved the assembly in a manner which must remind the reader of the uncourtly conduct of Cromwell. Appearing suddenly in their midst, he addressed them in these words:—

“ Mr. Speaker, and Gentlemen of the house of Burgesses, I have heard of your resolves and augur ill of their effects. You have made it my duty to dissolve you, and you are dissolved accordingly.”

These proceedings occasioned throughout the colonies a still more strenuous revival of the non-importation agreement. The example was set by Boston, where an agreement was entered into not to import from Great Britain any articles whatever, except a few of the first necessity, from the 1st of January, 1769, to the 1st of January, 1770. And not to import tea, paper, glass, or painters' colours until the duties imposed on those articles should be taken off. This agreement was soon afterwards adopted in almost all the colonies, some of whom went so far as to break off all connection with Rhode Island and Georgia, in consequence of their comparative neutrality in the contest. All ranks and conditions of persons united in giving effect to this commercial agreement, great exertions were used to improve the manufactures of America, and it was the pride and fashion of the ladies to exclude from their dress all the produce of the mother country. The names of such persons as acted inconsistently with this agreement were published and stigmatised, and the enthusiasm of the whole country daily rose to a greater height. Committees were appointed to examine the cargoes of vessels from Great Britain, in order to prevent any breach of the compact, and in some cases the goods imported in contravention of it were locked up in warehouses, or reshipped to England to prevent their sale.

Meanwhile, the Duke of Grafton had been placed at the head of the British administration, and supported with great strenuousness a proposition for the repeal of all the duties imposed for the purpose of raising a revenue in the colonies. The conduct of the British Parliament on this occasion deserves particular attention. The measure was imperfectly carried, and notwithstanding the repeal of the other duties, that on tea was suffered to remain.

“Never,” says Judge Marshall, “did a great and wise nation adopt a more ill-judged measure than this. The contest with America was plainly a contest of principle; and had it been conducted entirely on principle by both sides, the amount of taxes proposed to be raised was too inconsiderable to have been deemed by either of sufficient importance to induce them to hazard on that account the consequences already produced. But the principle was in the opinion of both of the utmost magnitude. The measure now proposed for conciliation, while it encouraged in the Americans the hope that their cause was gaining strength in Britain, had no tendency to remove the ground of contest, their opposition had been founded on the conviction that the right to tax them was vested exclusively in themselves, and while this measure was thought to evidence the effect already produced by that opposition, it left in full force all the motives which originally produced it.”

Information of these late concessions having been forwarded to America, a meeting was held of the merchants and traders of Boston to consider them. By this meeting they were resolved to be unsatisfactory, and therefore that the non-importa-

tion agreement should continue as binding as ever. The same agreement was preserved in full force in Virginia, and it was determined to persevere in it until the duty on tea was repealed.

Great difficulties, however, and great sacrifices obstructed the execution of this scheme. The distress occasioned by it to the British merchants, which induced them to besiege the Parliament with petitions for concession, was fully shared by the American traders. The inhabitants therefore of New York and of some other provinces, resolved to confine their non-importation to the article taxed, namely, tea. The Bostonians earnestly remonstrated against this limitation, but in vain; the resolution was persisted in, and the former agreement came to be universally abandoned.

About this time a circumstance occurred which threatened to bring the dispute between Great Britain and her American colonies to a speedy crisis. The two regiments stationed at Boston had from the first been a source of constant annoyance to the inhabitants. Frequent quarrels arose; and at length an affray took place in which a party of the soldiery fired on their opponents, and four people were killed. Alarm-bells were immediately rung, a mob assembled, who were infuriated by the spectacle of the dead bodies, and far more serious mischief would have ensued had not the lieutenant-governor promised that the law should be strictly enforced on the perpetrators of the offence. Accordingly Captain Preston who had commanded, and the soldiers who had fired, were committed to prison for trial. No blame appears to have attached to the individuals accused. They were acquitted by a Boston jury, and their cause was pleaded by

two of the most zealous advocates of American freedom. Notwithstanding, however, the candour with which the trials was conducted, the English ministers availed themselves of the disturbed state of the public mind to render the governor and judges of Massachusetts independent of the province, by transferring the payment of their salaries from the assembly to the crown.

The determination of the colonists to use no tea which had paid duty was so generally observed, that no less than seventeen millions of pounds of that commodity were accumulated in the warehouses of the East India Company. With a view of getting rid of this immense stock they urged the ministers to take off the American duty of three-pence per pound on importation, and offered in lieu to pay double that sum on exportation. This auspicious opportunity for reconciling their differences was rejected by government, and either as an indulgence to the company, or in order to give effect to their revenue system in America, drawbacks were allowed on tea exported to the colonies, and the duty on that article exported by the company was entirely taken off. After these encouragements the company proceeded to export largely to the colonies, and great quantities were consigned to agents in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Charleston, and other principal trading ports.

These proceedings offered opportunity to some American merchants of immense and most lucrative speculation, and it remained to be proved whether they would sacrifice large emoluments to their patriotic principles. It was well known that whatever tea was landed would be sold, and therefore strong resolutions were entered into throughout

the provinces, declaring that whoever should aid or abet in landing, or vending this article, would be deemed an enemy to his country. The consignees were very generally compelled to relinquish their appointments, and in most instances the vessels returned laden with the same cargoes with which they had left England. In other instances the tea was landed, but spoiled by being stowed in damp cellars; while at Boston, which was ever foremost in the assertion of American rights, an immense crowd repaired to the quay, when a number of the most resolute, disguised like Mohawk Indians, boarded the vessels, and emptied into the ocean the contents of three hundred and forty-two chests of tea.

This open violation of the rights of property afforded to the ministry the very opportunity they most desired, of marking the insubordination of the province of Massachusetts with such signal punishment as might operate as an example to the colonies at large. For this purpose Lord North, then prime minister, brought forward a motion in the House of Commons, on the 14th of March, 1774;—

“ That leave be given to bring in a bill for the immediate removal of the officers concerned in the collection and management of his Majesty’s duties and customs from the town of Boston, in the province of Massachusetts Bay, in North America; and to discontinue the landing and discharging, lading and shipping of goods, wares, and merchandise at the said town of Boston, or within the harbour thereof.”

Perhaps it is the most striking indication that can be given of the infatuation of the British

Parliament, that this strange measure passed into a law almost without opposition. It constitutes one of the most tremendous penal enactments ever passed by a liberal and christian government.

On receiving * the first intelligence of the Boston Port Bill, a meeting of the inhabitants of that town was called. One sentiment alone seemed to pervade them all. Instead of seeking to shelter their individual interests from the approaching storm, a more extended determination was produced to offer a united resistance. Resolutions were passed, expressing their opinion of the impolicy, injustice, and cruelty of the act, and inviting the other colonies to join them in an agreement to stop all imports from Great Britain, Ireland, and the West Indies, till the obnoxious measure was repealed. Throughout the continent a similar feeling was aroused. From all quarters the Bostonians received addresses expressive of sympathy in their sufferings, and exhorting them to resolution as sufferers in the common cause.

The legislative assembly of Virginia was in session when the intelligence of the Boston Port Bill reached that province. They immediately appointed the 1st of June, 1774, on which day the operation of the bill was to commence, to be set apart for fasting, humiliation, and prayer for the Divine interposition in their behalf. Similar resolutions were adopted elsewhere, and throughout almost all the colonies the day was kept as one of religious observance and devout humiliation.

The opinions of Colonel Washington at this awful crisis may be learned from a letter written at

* Judge Marshall's Life of Washington.

the time to Mr., afterwards Lord Fairfax, who was strongly opposed to violent measures, and anxious that time should be given for the repeal of the obnoxious acts. In the course of the letter Washington writes,—

“ As to your political sentiments, I would heartily join you in them, so far as relates to a humble and dutiful petition to the throne, provided there was the most distant hope of success. But have we not tried this already? Have we not addressed the Lords, and remonstrated to the Commons? And to what end? Did they deign to look at our petitions? Does it not appear, as clear as the sun in its meridian brightness, that there is a regular, systematic plan formed to fix the right and practice of taxation upon us? Does not the uniform conduct of Parliament for some years past confirm this? Do not all the debates, especially those just brought to us, in the House of Commons on the side of government, expressly declare that America must be taxed in aid of the British funds, and that she has no longer resources within herself? Is there any thing to be expected from petitioning after this? Is not the attack upon the liberty and property of the people of Boston, before restitution of the loss to the India Company was demanded, a plain and self-evident proof of what they are aiming at? Do not the subsequent bills (now I dare say acts), for depriving the Massachusetts Bay of its charter, and for transporting offenders into other colonies or to Great Britain for trial, where it is impossible from the nature of the thing that justice can be obtained, convince us that the administration is determined to stick at nothing to carry its point?

Ought we not, then, to put our virtue and fortitude to the severest test?

“ With you I think it a folly to attempt more than we can execute, as that will not only bring disgrace upon us, but weaken our cause; yet I think we may do more than is generally believed, in respect to the non-importation scheme. As to the withholding of our remittances, that is another point, in which I own I have my doubts on several accounts, but principally on that of justice; for I think, whilst we are accusing others of injustice, we should be just ourselves; and how this can be, whilst we owe a considerable debt, and refuse payment of it to Great Britain, is to me inconceivable. Nothing but the last extremity, I think, can justify it. Whether this is now come, is the question.”

The conjectures expressed in the above letter were speedily realised. An act shortly after passed the British Parliament for *better regulating* the government of the province of Massachusetts Bay. By this act the charter of the province was utterly nullified, and the appointment of all magistrates and officers of every kind vested in the crown. The next act was to secure *the impartial administration of justice* in the province. By this it was provided:—

“ That in case any person should be indicted in that province for murder, or any other capital offence, and it should appear by information given on oath to the governor, that the fact was committed in the exercise and aid of magistracy in suppressing riots, and that a fair trial could not be had in the province, he should send the person

so indicted to any other colony, or to Great Britain, to be tried."

The effect of these tyrannical acts upon Boston, in particular, was most calamitous. Silent streets, deserted arsenals, closed warehouses, unemployed workmen, and starving families testified that the spirit of commercial industry had retired from the city. At the same time the sympathy of their fellow countrymen contributed materially to mitigate their sufferings, and evinced itself in almost unequalled acts of disinterested patriotism. In particular the inhabitants of the town of Salem, which, by the removal of the seat of government, had become the metropolis of the province, in a memorial presented at the dissolution of the last assembly at Boston, addressed the governor in the following terms:—

"We are deeply afflicted with the sense of our public calamities; but the miseries that are now rapidly hastening on our brethren in the capital of the province greatly excite our commiseration; and we hope your Excellency will use your endeavours to prevent a further accumulation of evils on that already sorely distressed people."—"By shutting up the port of Boston some imagine that the course of trade might be turned hither and to our benefit, but nature in the formation of our harbour forbids our becoming rivals in commerce with that convenient mart; and, were it otherwise, we must be dead to every idea of justice, and lost to all feelings of humanity, could we indulge in one thought to seize on wealth and raise our fortunes on the ruin of our suffering neighbours."

In the midst of these accumulating sufferings none felt more deeply than George Washington the solemnity of the crisis, and the responsibilities which it imposed. On the 18th of July, 1774, he presided at a general meeting of the freeholders and inhabitants of the county of Fairfax, at which a series of resolutions were passed, which may be considered as embodying his sentiments at the commencement of the revolutionary contest as well as the predominant opinions of the province of Virginia. They are chiefly expressive of a determined denial of the right claimed by the mother country to tax the American colonies, of a determination to remit all commercial intercourse with Great Britain until the claim was abandoned, and with all parties in America who should refuse to enter into a similar agreement. They contain a luminous statement of the constitutional rights of America, and a number of earnest exhortations to the use of those expedients which should enable the colonies to dispense with the commerce of England, and to consolidate their strength by union. But perhaps the most interesting of these resolutions, as developing the character of Washington and the prevailing temper of his countrymen, is as follows :—

“ 17. Resolved, That it is the opinion of this meeting that, during our present difficulty and distress, no slaves ought to be imported into any of the British colonies on this continent ; and we take this opportunity of declaring our most earnest wishes to see an entire stop for ever put to such a wicked, cruel, and unnatural trade.”

It is matter of common observation that virtue is

not only tested but improved by adversity. Its tendency is to incite to thoughtful self-examination, to mitigate asperity, to soften and expand the heart, and lay open some precious veins within the bosom which were previously concealed beneath the verdure of the undisturbed and flourishing soil. The perusal of this period of American history is calculated to impress the conviction, that this is no less true of communities than of individuals. In the general tone of feeling which now began to characterise the people it is easy to perceive "the uses of adversity," not only in inspiring a general feeling of harmony and benevolence, but in some instances in leading them back to something like the unsophisticated piety of their puritan ancestors. More particularly in their temporary recognition of the claims of the unpitied African, they seemed to have realised those benigner influences of the "Dread Goddess," which teach the sufferer

Exact his own defects to scan,

What others are to feel, and know himself a man.

CHAPTER IX.

State of Opinion in Great Britain with respect to the American Colonies—Opinions of Burke—His Speech on American Taxation—Opinions of Lord Chatham—Of Mr. Pitt—Of the English Nation—Reasons of their Opposition to the American Claims.

It will be readily perceived by considering the political supremacy of Great Britain, and the political subordination of the American colonies, that while those events which determined the decision of the contest between them occurred in America, those which marked its previous stages were transacted in the parent state. It is necessary, therefore, in offering a history of that conflict, the narration of which has now become identified with the biography of Washington, to dwell particularly upon the state of feeling which at that time prevailed in England, and upon the conduct of those who chiefly interested themselves in the claims of the colonies. And here it is a remarkable, and at the same time an undeniable fact, that the highly endowed men whose names stand in a sort of natural association with those times, and whose enlightened views outstripped the progress of opinion and anticipated the matured experience of later days, were the most powerful advocates of American freedom.

Foremost among these stands the name of Edmund Burke; perhaps the greatest political

philosopher whom any age or country has been privileged to witness ;—a man whose sagacity was only inferior to the gift of prophecy ; whose very theories stood in the stead of experience ; the unexampled resources of whose fancy only supplied the means of conviction, without influencing his powers of judgment ; and whose profound political wisdom was dependent upon the harmony of his sentiments, with that undeviating equity which controuls the interests of the universe.

It is a remarkable instance of the practical character of Mr. Burke's mind, that although he made the interests of the American states a prominent object throughout the continuance of the dispute, yet he rarely, if ever touched upon the abstract question of the right of Great Britain to impose internal taxes on the colonies. He invariably contented himself with demonstrating the inexpediency of such a course, and its contrariety to the interests of both parties. Yet, although this right was never made the matter of distinct assertion and argument, it was incessantly denied by implication in those unparalleled orations in favour of American freedom, with which from time to time he shook the walls of the House of Commons.

An opportunity offered in April, 1774, for developing at great length his opinions upon the momentous question at issue. On the 19th of that month, Mr. Rose Fuller, member for Rye, moved in the House of Commons—

“ That this House will upon this day week resolve itself into a committee of the whole house, to take into consideration the duty of three pence per pound weight upon tea, payable in all his

Majesty's dominions in America, and also the appropriation of the said duty."

Upon this occasion, Mr. Burke delivered his celebrated speech on American taxation, the first he could ever be persuaded to publish. It is indeed a happy circumstance that this splendid oration is not lost to posterity. Apart from its conclusive reasonings upon its immediate subject, a higher value attaches to it in its general tendency. It is distinguished in a peculiar degree for that remarkable faculty of referring back the most heterogeneous details to a few leading and primary principles. So that this and a few other similar efforts of the same mind constitute the *principia* of this branch of philosophy;—a series of data which may be used as a calculus for the investigation of all the details of political science. In this address, he recapitulated with astonishing acuteness the various acts of government with respect to America, and the effect of these wavering and opposite measures on the colonists. At length he comes to the repeal, to which ministers were compelled, of all the other taxes, except the paltry one on tea, and the stubborn reservation of this three pence per pound as the little nucleus around which future imposts might accumulate.

"Could any thing," said he, "be a subject of more just alarm to America than to see you go out of the plain high road of finance, and give up your most certain revenues and your dearest interests merely for the sake of insulting your colonies? No man ever doubted that the commodity of tea could bear an imposition of three pence. But no commodity will bear three pence or will bear a penny when the general feelings of men are

irritated, and two millions of people are resolved not to pay. The feelings of the colonies were formerly the feelings of Great Britain. Theirs were formerly the feelings of Mr. Hampden*, when called upon for the payment of twenty shillings. Would twenty shillings have ruined Mr. Hampden's fortune? No! but the payment of half twenty shillings on the principle on which it was demanded, would have made him a slave. It is the weight of the preamble of which you are so fond, and not the weight of the duty, which the Americans are unable and unwilling to bear."

There is indeed one instance in which Mr. Burke in this address pleads a positive right as possessed by the colonies, and this he founds on Lord Hillsborough's letter, to which reference has already been made, and which Mr. Burke with his own inimitable felicity of expression designates "a canonical book of ministerial scripture; the general epistle to the Americans!" In this official communication, his Lordship declared that it never was the intention of ministers to impose any further taxes on America, for the purpose of raising a revenue; and fortifies himself in the statement by appealing to the language of royalty.

"This epistle," said Mr. Burke, "was not the letter of Lord Hillsborough solely, though he held the official pen. It was the letter of the noble Lord upon the floor†, and of all the King's then

* From the general tenor of this passage, and more especially from the reference to John Hampden as a parallel case, it is obvious that Mr. Burke concurred in principle, as well as in policy, with Washington and his countrymen.

† Lord North.

ministers, who (with, I think, the exception of two only,) are his ministers at this hour. The very first news that a British Parliament heard of what it was to do with the duties which it had given and granted to the King, was by the publication of the votes of American assemblies. It was in America that your resolutions were predeclared. It was from thence, that we knew for a certainty how much exactly, and not a scruple more or less, we were to repeal. We were unworthy to be let into the secret of our own conduct: the assemblies had confidential communications from his Majesty's confidential servants. We were nothing but instruments. Do you after this wonder that you have no weight and no respect in the colonies? After this, are you surprised that Parliament are every day and everywhere losing (I feel it with sorrow, I utter it with reluctance,) that reverential affection which so endearing a name of authority ought to carry with it; that you are obliged solely for respect to the bayonet; and that this house the 'pillar and the ground' of freedom, is itself held up only by the treacherous under-pinning, and clumsy buttresses of arbitrary power?

"After this letter, the question is no more of propriety or dignity. They are gone already. The faith of your sovereign is pledged for the political principle. The general declaration in the letter goes to the whole of it. You must, therefore, either abandon the scheme of taxing; or you must send the ministers tarred and feathered to America who dared to hold out the royal faith for a remuneration of all taxes for revenue. Then you must punish, or this faith you must preserve. The preservation of this faith is of more consequence

than the duties on *red lead*, or on *white lead*, or on broken *glass*, or *atlas-ordinary*, or *demy-fine*, or *blue-royal*, or *bastard*, or *foolscap*, which you have given up; or the threepence on tea which you retained. The letter went stamped with the public authority of this kingdom. The instructions for the colony government go under no other sanction; and America cannot believe, and will not obey you, if you do not preserve this channel of communication sacred. You are now punishing the colonies for acting on distinctions held out by that very ministry which is here shining in riches, in favour, and in power, and urging the punishment of the very offence to which they had themselves been the tempters."

After entering into a detailed and philosophical exposition of the history of this great question, in which he embalmed the names of the chief advocates of American rights in eulogies as imperishable as the English tongue, he overwhelmed the house with the following appeal:—

"Again and again revert to your old principles. Seek peace and ensue it. Leave America, if she has taxable matter in her, to tax herself. I am not here going into the distinctions of rights, not attempting to mark their boundaries; I do not enter into these metaphysical distinctions, I hate the very sound of them. Leave the Americans as they anciently stood; and these distinctions, born of our unhappy contest, will die along with it. They and we, and their and our ancestors, have been happy under that system. Let the memory of all actions, in contradiction to that good old mode, on both sides be extinguished for ever. Be

content to bind America by laws of trade, you have always done it; let this be your reason for binding their trade. Do not burden them by taxes, you were not used to do so from the beginning. Let this be your reason for not taxing. These are the arguments of states and kingdoms. Leave the rest to the schools, for there only they may be discussed with safety. But if intemperately, unwisely, fatally, you sophisticate and poison the very source of government, by urging subtle deductions and consequences odious to those you govern, from the unlimited and illimitable nature of supreme sovereignty, you will teach them by these means to call that sovereignty itself in question. When you drive him hard, the boar will surely turn upon the hunters. If that sovereignty and their freedom cannot be reconciled, which will they take? They will cast your sovereignty in your face. Nobody will be argued into slavery, Sir. Let the gentlemen on the other side call forth all their ability, let the best of them get up and tell me what one character of liberty the Americans have, and what one brand of slavery they are free from, if they are bound in their property and industry by all the restraints you can imagine or conceive, and at the same time are made pack-horses of every tax you choose to impose, without the least share in granting them. When they bear the burdens of unlimited monopoly, will you bring them to bear the burdens of unlimited revenue too? The Englishman in America will feel that this is slavery: that it is legal slavery will be no compensation either to his feelings or his understanding.

“A noble lord * who spoke some time ago, is full of the fire of ingenuous youth, and when he has modelled the ideas of a lively imagination by further experience, he will be an ornament to his country in either house. He has said that the Americans are our children, and how can they revolt against their parent. He says that if they are not free in their present state, England is not free, because Manchester and other considerable places are not represented. So then because some towns in England are not represented, America is to have no representative at all. They are ‘our children,’ but when children ask for bread, we are not to give a stone. Is it because the natural resistance of things, and the various mutations of time hinder our government or any scheme of government from being any more than a sort of approximation to the right, is it therefore that the colonies are to recede from it infinitely? When this child of ours wishes to assimilate to its parent, and to reflect with a true filial resemblance the beauteous countenance of British liberty, are we to turn to them the shameful parts of our constitution? Are we to give them our weakness for their strength, our opprobrium for their glory; and the slough of slavery, which we are not able to work off, to serve them for their freedom?

“If this be the case ask yourselves this question, Will they be content in such a state of slavery? If not, look to the consequences: reflect how you are to govern a people who think they ought to be free, and know they are not. Your

* Lord Carmarthen.

scheme yields no revenue, it yields nothing but discontent, disorder, disobedience; and such is the state of America, that after wading up to your eyes in blood you could only end where you first begun; that is, to tax where no revenue is to be found, to—— My voice fails me—my inclination indeed carries me no further—all is confusion beyond it.”

In noticing the opinions of the greatest statesmen of these times upon the question at issue between Great Britain and our American colonies, it is impossible to pass by with a mere nominal mention the illustrious Charles Fox, whom Mr. Burke, after the melancholy occasion on which their friendship was for ever disrupted, pronounced to be “the most brilliant and accomplished debater the world ever saw.” There are, doubtless, some respects in which Mr. Fox was inferior to his panegyrist; but there are other and more important respects in which he was inferior to none. The tribute fondly paid by his political associates, and ingenuously conceded by his opponents, to the vast power, the matchless elegance, and the “neglected grandeur” of his mind, stands far below the tribute recorded on the history of whole nations, who still enjoy the benefit of his efforts in the universal cause of mankind, to the simplicity of his aims, to the grasping sympathy which made him the near relative of his species;—to the inviolable integrity of his principles, and the boundless benevolence of his heart.

Unhappily there are but few of his speeches which remain to us entire; but “in their most imperfect reliques,” as Lord Erskine eloquently observes, “the bones of a giant may be discovered.”

Enough remains to indicate that he maintained the claims of the colonies with all the strenuousness and fervour which, in such a mind as his, the conviction of their justice would excite. In the course of the debate on the repeal of the tea duty, Mr. Fox argued in favour of the measure as one alike obligatory in principle and comparatively necessary on the ground of policy. With respect to its expediency he pointed to the loyalty and peacefulness of America prior to the passing of the stamp act, to the murmurs and disaffection immediately consequent upon that ill-omened measure, and to the quiet and gratitude which instantly succeeded its repeal. "Taxes," said he, "have produced a contrary behaviour; riots and disturbances have succeeded, which constitute an absolute dereliction of the authority of this country." With respect to the principle of the duty in question, he states his argument in the following brief and masterly manner:—

"A tax can only be laid for three purposes: the first for a commercial regulation, the second for a revenue, and the third for the purpose of asserting your right. As to the two first it has been clearly denied that it is either; as to the latter, it is only done with a view of irritating and declaring war against the Americans; which, if you persist in, I am clearly of opinion you will force them into open rebellion."

Notwithstanding these exertions the motion was lost by a large majority.

Again, upon the introduction of the bill for the better regulating the government of Massachusetts

Bay, he offered the most powerful opposition to the measure. He distinctly denied the right of the parent state to tax the colonies without their consent, and stated the relation of America and Great Britain, in the matter of taxation and legislation, to be precisely similar to that of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. With respect to the particular measure affecting Massachusetts Bay, he declared that he regarded it as utterly unsuited to its purpose :—

“ If,” said he, “ a system of force is to be established, there is no provision for it in this bill, it does not go far enough ; if it is to induce them by fair means, it goes too far. I look upon this measure to be, in effect, taking away their charter. I consider it as a bill of pains and penalties ; for it begins with a crime and ends with a punishment.”

Reference has already been made to the conduct of Lord Chatham upon the question which led to the American war. His opinions were thus represented by his son, in the House of Commons, a few years after his decease :—

“ He thought this country had a right to lay duties for the regulation of commerce, duties incidental to the extension of trade, calculated for the mutual benefit of both countries ; but not a single tax or duty of any kind for the purpose of raising a revenue in America, to be remitted home, and to be disposable by the British Parliament. This, however, is but a speculative question, totally different and distinct from the doctrines which were productive of the war. Those, at least, which produced the riot at Boston, from whence it was acknowledged by every side of the house the war

originated, did not come within the above description. They were taxes upon the imports laid on expressly by the British Parliament, collected under its authority, and intended for the British treasury; and were not even pretended to hold out any advantage to both countries, but to one only; neither were they directed to promote or extend the commerce of America, but merely to draw out of the pockets of the inhabitants of that country certain sums of money for augmenting the revenue of this."

But there was one other individual who maintained these principles, whose name is the more valuable as associated with the advocacy of the American claims, because their most strenuous opponents were the foremost to exalt his vast powers as a statesman—powers which in after years controlled the destinies of his country. This was the celebrated Mr. Pitt. Though inferior to his noble father in many points of character, and more especially in that zeal for liberty and abhorrence of oppression, which were most conspicuous in his lordship's conduct as a statesman, he was fully equal to him in that sagacity and power of mind which gave to both the unexampled influence they possessed over the public mind. But a peculiar value attaches to the sentiments of Mr. Pitt on this momentous subject, because they were maintained during the uncorrupted childhood of his political life, before he had known the lust of power or conceived the projects of an insatiable ambition.

"A noble lord," said Mr. Pitt, when supporting a motion of his subsequent rival and political enemy, Mr. Fox, "a noble lord who spoke early, in

the heat of his zeal has called it a holy war. For my part, though the honourable gentleman who made the motion and some other gentlemen have been more than once, in the course of the debate, severely reprehended for calling it a wicked and accursed war, I am persuaded, and will affirm, that it is a most accursed, wicked, barbarous, cruel, unjust and diabolical war. It was conceived in injustice; it was nurtured and brought forth in folly; its footsteps were marked with blood, slaughter, persecution and devastation; in truth, everything which goes to constitute moral depravity and human turpitude, is to be found in it. It is pregnant with misery of every kind. The mischiefs, however, recoil on the unhappy people of this country; who are made the instruments by which the wicked purposes of its authors are effected. The nation is drained of its best blood, and of its vital resources of men and money. The expense of it is enormous, much beyond any former experience; and yet what have the British nation received in return? Nothing but a series of ineffective victories or severe defeats:—victories celebrated only by a temporary triumph over our brethren, whom we would trample down and destroy; which fill the land with mourning for the loss of dear and valuable relations, slain in the impious cause of enforcing unconditional submission, or with narratives of the glorious exertions of men struggling in the holy cause of liberty; though struggling under all the difficulties and disadvantages which are in general deemed the necessary concomitants of victory and success. Where is the Englishman on reading the narratives of those bloody and well-fought contests who can refrain from lamenting the

loss of so much British blood spilt in such a cause, or from weeping, on whatever side victory may be declared. Add to this melancholy consideration, that, on whichever side we look, we can perceive nothing but our natural and powerful enemies, or lukewarm and faithless friends, rejoicing in our calamities or meditating our ultimate downfall.

“I have taken the present opportunity of delivering my sentiments on the American war. There is not a point in which I considered it—there is not a feature which presented itself to my notice, but serves the more and more to confirm me in the opinion I have long formed concerning its mischievous and destructive tendency, and I trust the opinion I have given will be received as it is sincerely intended, as fully expressive of my principles so far as they may be applicable, or seem to bear a relation to the American war in all its future as well as former stages.”

We have thus seen that the greatest and best statesmen of this, or perhaps of any other day, however widely they differed upon other matters of policy or justice, concurred in their solemn protest against the course pursued by Great Britain towards her American dependencies.

It is now natural to inquire how far their opinions and example influenced the conduct of the people at large. It must indeed be confessed, that the majority of the British public favoured the scheme of raising a revenue from America, and testified but little concern as to the means by which the measure should be enforced. For this it is not very difficult to account. In an attentive comparison of this period with the present times,

nothing is more conspicuous than the rapid advance in the popular knowledge of political rights which the intervening years have witnessed. Since the period of which we have treated, the experience of mankind has been improved by an age unusually pregnant with momentous events. Those extreme cases have occurred which afford the surest test of general principles. The superficial observer no less than the political philosopher has obtained an immense induction of facts, ascertained by the most decisive experiments. No comparison can be drawn between the degree of political knowledge then possessed and that by which the present times are distinguished. The enthusiasts of that age have become the sober teachers of this, and the predictions which were then deemed fanatical have become the very substance of modern belief. To this it is obvious to add that the majority of every nation are disposed to confound its prosperity with its territorial aggrandisement, and to estimate its opulence by the multitude whom its lust for wealth can lay under contribution. Contemplating only their immediate gain, and unable to comprehend in their account remoter interests, they dreamed that the American colonies would only be valuable in proportion to their subservience, and that revenue could only be drawn from them by the pressure of direct taxation.

CHAPTER X.

Meeting of Congress—Opinions of Washington at this Time shown from various Letters—Opinions of the First Congress and the Americans at large on the Subject of Independence.

THUS in England the warning voice of the most distinguished statesmen were raised in vain against the mistaken avarice of the nation at large, and especially against an inert parliamentary majority whom the minister dragged after him at his pleasure, from error to error, through measures of impudent menace, daring attack, cowardly concession, and shameful retreat.

Meanwhile, in America the momentous step was taken which ensured an eventual and complete triumph to her cause. This was the union of the provinces in a general congress. It is said that the idea of a general congress originated with Dr. Franklin, and was first suggested by him in a communication to the Massachusetts' assembly. At all events in the beginning of the year 1774, the necessity of the measure came to be entertained as a popular sentiment throughout the provinces. Accordingly delegates from all the counties of Virginia assembled in convention at Williamsburg, in which convention Colonel Washington represented Fairfax county. By this body, delegates were appointed to meet those from the other colonies in general congress at Philadelphia in the following September, and of these Wash-

ington was one of five who represented the colony of Virginia.

Before noticing the acts of this body it is important to understand what was now the precise state of Washington's mind as regards the dispute between the two countries. It is thus important for two reasons; first, because the sentiments of Washington are allowed by American writers to constitute the fairest exponent of those of his countrymen at large, and next, because these sentiments have been much misunderstood in consequence of the circulation of a series of spurious letters bearing his name, and tending to show that he did not enter heartily into the defence of the cause of his country. The statements of these letters were believed by many. They even crept into history, and were, a little before the close of his life, revived against him by his political opponents.

The utter falsehood of these representations will best be shown by three of his letters, written about this time. The first was addressed to Bryan Fairfax, and contains the following passages:—

“ That I differ very widely from you, in respect to the mode of obtaining a repeal of the acts so much and so justly complained of, I shall not hesitate to acknowledge; and that this difference in opinion probably proceeds from the different constructions we put upon the conduct and intention of the ministry may also be true; but, as I see nothing, on the one hand, to induce a belief, that the Parliament would embrace a favourable opportunity of repealing acts, which they go on with great rapidity to pass, in order to enforce their tyrannical system; and, on the other, I observe, or I think I

observe, that government is pursuing a regular plan at the expense of law and justice to overthrow our constitutional rights and liberties, how can I expect any redress from a measure, which has been ineffectually tried already? For, Sir, what is it we are contending against? Is it against paying the duty of three pence per pound on tea because burthensome? No, it is the right only, that we have all along disputed; and to this end we have already petitioned his Majesty in as humble and dutiful a manner, as subjects could do. Nay, more, we applied to the House of Lords and House of Commons in their different legislative capacities, setting forth, that, as Englishmen, we could not be deprived of this essential and valuable part of our constitution. If, then, as the fact really is, it is against the right of taxation that we now do, and, as I before said, all along have contended, why should they suppose an exertion of this power would be less obnoxious now than formerly? And what reason have we to believe, that they would make a second attempt, whilst the same sentiments fill the breast of every American, if they did not intend to enforce it if possible?

“The conduct of the Boston people could not justify the rigour of their measures, unless there had been a requisition of payment and refusal of it; nor did that conduct require an act to deprive the government of Massachusetts Bay of their charter, or to exempt offenders from trial in the places where offences were committed, as there was not, nor could there be, a single instance produced to manifest the necessity of it. Are not all these things evident proofs of a fixed and uniform plan to tax us? If we want further proofs, do not all the

debates in the House of Commons serve to confirm this? And has not General Gage's conduct since his arrival, in stopping the address of his Council, and publishing a proclamation more becoming a Turkish bashaw, than an English governor, declaring it treason to associate in any manner by which the commerce of Great Britain is to be affected,—has not this exhibited an unexampled testimony of the most despotic system of tyranny, that ever was practised in a free government? In short, what further proofs are wanting to satisfy any one of the designs of the ministry, than their own acts, which are uniform and plainly tending to the same point, nay, if I mistake not, avowedly to fix the right of taxation? What hope have we then from petitioning, when they tell us, that now or never is the time to fix the matter? Shall we, after this, whine and cry for relief, when we have already tried it in vain? Or shall we supinely sit and see one province after another fall a sacrifice to despotism?

“ If I were in any doubt, as to the right which the Parliament of Great Britain had to tax us without our consent, I should most heartily coincide with you in opinion, that to petition, and petition only, is the proper method to apply for relief; because we should then be asking a favour, and not claiming a right, which, by the law of nature and by our constitution, we are, in my opinion, indubitably entitled to. I should even think it criminal to go further than this, under such an idea; but I have none such. I think the Parliament of Great Britain have no more right to put their hands into my pocket, without my consent, than I have to put my hands into yours; and this being already urged

to them in a firm, but decent manner, by all the colonies, what reason is there to expect any thing from their justice?

“As to the resolution for addressing the throne, I own to you, Sir, I think the whole might as well have been expunged. I expect nothing from the measure, nor should my voice have sanctioned it, if the non-importation scheme was intended to be retarded by it; for I am convinced, as much as I am of my existence, that there is no relief for us but in their distress; and I think, at least I hope, that there is public virtue enough left among us to deny ourselves every thing but the bare necessities of life to accomplish this end. This we have a right to do, and no power upon earth can compel us to do otherwise, till it has first reduced us to the most abject state of slavery. The stopping of our exports would, no doubt, be a shorter method than the other to effect this purpose; but if we owe money to Great Britain, nothing but the last necessity can justify the non-payment of it; and, therefore, I have great doubts upon this head, and wish to see the other method first tried, which is legal and will facilitate these payments.

“I cannot conclude without expressing some concern, that I should differ so widely in sentiments from you, on a matter of such great moment and general import; and I should much distrust my own judgment upon the occasion, if my nature did not recoil at the thought of submitting to measures, which I think subversive of every thing that I ought to hold dear and valuable, and did I not find, at the same time, that the voice of mankind is with me.”

The second was addressed to the same gentleman a week before he quitted Mount Vernon to attend the first meeting of congress. It is as follows ;—

“ Mount Vernon, 24 August, 1774.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ YOUR letter of the 5th instant came to this place, forwarded by Mr. Ramsay, a few days after my return from Williamsburg, and I delayed acknowledging it sooner, in the hope that I should find time, before I began my journey to Philadelphia, to answer it fully, if not satisfactorily ; but, as much of my time has been engrossed since I came home by company, by your brother's sale and the business consequent thereupon, in writing letters to England, and now in attending to my own domestic affairs previous to my departure, I find it impossible to bestow as much attention on the subject of your letter as I could wish, and, therefore, I must rely upon your good nature and candour in excuse for not attempting it. In truth, persuaded as I am, that you have read all the political pieces, which compose a large share of the gazettes at this time, I should think it, but for your request, a piece of inexcusable arrogance in me, to make the least essay towards a change in your political opinions ; for I am sure I have no new light to throw upon the subject, nor any other arguments to offer in support of my own doctrine, than what you have seen ; and I could only in general add, that an innate spirit of freedom first told me, that the measures, which the administration have for some time been, and now are most violently pursuing, are

opposed to every principle of natural justice ; whilst much abler heads than my own have fully convinced me, that they are not only repugnant to natural right, but subversive of the laws and constitution of Great Britain itself, in the establishment of which some of the best blood in the kingdom has been spilt.

“ Satisfied, then, that the acts of the British Parliament are no longer governed by the principles of justice, that they are trampling upon the valuable rights of Americans, confirmed to them by charter and by the constitution they themselves boast of, and convinced beyond the smallest doubt, that these measures are the result of deliberation, and attempted to be carried into execution by the hand of power, is it a time to trifle, or risk our cause upon petitions, which with difficulty obtain access, and afterwards are thrown by with the utmost contempt? Or should we, because heretofore unsuspecting of design, and then unwilling to enter into disputes with the mother country, go on to bear more, and forbear to enumerate our just causes of complaint? For my own part, I shall not undertake to say where the line between Great Britain and the colonies should be drawn ; but I am clearly of opinion, that one ought to be drawn, and our rights clearly ascertained. I could wish, I own, that the dispute had been left to posterity to determine, but the crisis is arrived when we must assert our rights, or submit to every imposition, that can be heaped upon us, till custom and use shall make us tame and abject slaves.

“ I intended to write no more than an apology for not writing ; but I find I am insensibly running into a length I did not expect, and therefore shall

conclude with remarking, that, if you disavow the right of Parliament to tax us, unrepresented as we are, we only differ in respect to the mode of opposition, and this difference principally arises from your belief, that they (the Parliament I mean) want a decent opportunity to repeal the acts; whilst I am fully convinced, that there has been a regular, systematic plan formed to enforce them, and that nothing but unanimity and firmness in the colonies, which they did not expect, can prevent it. By the best advices from Boston it seems, that General Gage is exceedingly disconcerted at the quiet and steady conduct of the people of the Massachusetts Bay, and at the measures pursuing by the other governments. I dare say he expected to force those oppressed people into compliance, or irritate them to acts of violence before this, for a more colourable pretence of ruling that and the other colonies with a high hand.

“ I shall set off on Wednesday next for Philadelphia, where, if you have any commands, I shall be glad to oblige you in them; being, dear Sir, with real regard,

“ Your most obedient servant.”

The third is addressed to Captain Robert Mackenzie, formerly a captain of the Virginia regiment, and now attached to the forty-third regiment of foot of the regular army, which was now stationed at Boston. It is as follows:—

“ Philadelphia, 9 October, 1774.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ Your letter of the 13th ultimo from Boston gave me pleasure, as I learnt thereby, that

you were well, and might be expected at Mount Vernon in your way to or from James River, in the course of the winter.

“When I have said this, permit me with the freedom of a friend (for you know I always esteemed you) to express my sorrow, that fortune should place you in a service, that must fix curses to the latest posterity upon the contrivers, and, if success (which, by the by, is impossible) accompanies it, execrations upon all those, who have been instrumental in the execution.

“I do not mean by this to insinuate, that an officer is not to discharge his duty, even when chance, not choice, has placed him in a disagreeable situation ; but I conceive, when you condemn the conduct of the Massachusetts people, you reason from effects, not causes ; otherwise you would not wonder at a people, who are every day receiving fresh proofs of a systematic assertion of an arbitrary power, deeply planned to overturn the laws and constitution of their country, and to violate the most essential and valuable rights of mankind, being irritated, and with difficulty restrained from acts of the greatest violence and intemperance. For my own part, I confess to you candidly, that I view things in a very different point of light from the one in which you seem to consider them ; and though you are led to believe by venal men,—for such I must take the liberty of calling those new-fangled counsellors, who fly to and surround you, and all others, who, for honours or pecuniary gratifications, will lend their aid to overturn the constitution, and introduce a system of arbitrary government,—although you are taught, I say, by discoursing with such men, to believe,

that the people of Massachusetts are rebellious, setting up for independency, and what not, give me leave, my good friend, to tell you, that you are abused, grossly abused. This I advance with a degree of confidence and boldness, which may claim your belief, having better opportunities of knowing the real sentiments of the people you are among, from the leaders of them, in opposition to the present measures of the administration, than you have from those whose business it is, not to disclose truths, but to misrepresent facts in order to justify as much as possible to the world their own conduct*. Give me leave to add, and I think I can announce it as a fact, that *it is not the wish or the interest of that government, or any other upon this continent, separately or collectively to set up for independence*; but this you may at the same time rely on, that none of them will ever submit to the loss of those valuable rights and privileges, which are essential to the happiness of every free state, and without which, life, liberty, and property are rendered totally insecure.

“These, Sir, being certain consequences, which must naturally result from the late acts of Parliament relative to America in general, and the government of Massachusetts Bay in particular, is it to be wondered at, I repeat, that men, who wish

* “The writer being now at Philadelphia attending the first meeting of the Continental Congress, he alludes to his intercourse with the members from Massachusetts, and to his information derived from them. He seems to have taken pains to ascertain the impressions existing in different parts of the country, and to have cultivated an acquaintance with the delegates for that purpose. In his Diary, on the 28th of September, there is this entry;—‘Spent the afternoon with the Boston gentlemen.’”

to avert the impending blow, should attempt to oppose it in its progress, or prepare for their defence, if it cannot be averted? Surely I may be allowed to answer in the negative; and again give me leave to add as my opinion, that more blood will be spilled on this occasion, if the ministry are determined to push matters to extremity, than history has ever yet furnished instances of in the annals of North America, and such a vital wound will be given to the peace of this great country, as time itself cannot cure, or eradicate the remembrance of.

“ But I have done. I was involuntarily led into a short discussion of this subject by your remarks on the conduct of the Boston people, and your opinion of their wishes to set up for independency. *I am well satisfied, that no such thing is desired by any thinking man in all North America; on the contrary, that it is the ardent wish of the warmest advocates for liberty, that peace and tranquillity, upon constitutional grounds, may be restored, and the horrors of civil discord prevented.*”

The language of Washington in this last letter, respecting the ulterior designs of his countrymen, naturally lead us to inquire what were the predominant sentiments of the American statesmen on this point; more especially is it important to ascertain the views with which the first Congress assembled;—whether they regarded themselves as an independent parliament, or whether they simply designed to consult for the interests of their constituents, subject to the legislative controul of the parent government. Upon this subject, the laborious Editor of Washington's Correspondence has bestowed a singular degree of research, which has

brought to light some very interesting details as to the notions of the American patriots and the country at large upon the subject of independence*.

It is not easy to determine at what precise date the idea of independence was first entertained by the principal politicians of America. English writers, arguing from the conduct of the colonists, have commonly charged them with secretly harbouring such designs at a very early period. This is not probable. The spirit and form of their institutions, it is true, led them to act frequently as an independent people, and to set up high claims in regard to their rights and privileges, but there is no sufficient evidence to prove, that any province, or any number of prominent individuals, entertained serious thoughts of separating entirely from the mother country, till very near the actual commencement of the revolutionary war.

Gordon relates the following anecdote of a conversation, said to have taken place in the year 1759, between Mr. Pratt, afterwards Lord Camden, and Dr. Franklin, but he cites no authority.—“For all what you Americans say of your loyalty,” observed Mr. Pratt, “I know you will one day throw off your dependence upon this country; and, notwithstanding your boasted affection to it, will set up for independence.” Franklin answered, “No such idea is entertained in the mind of the Americans; and no such idea will ever enter their heads, unless you grossly abuse them.” ‘Very true,’ replied Mr. Pratt, ‘that is one of the main causes I see will happen, and will produce the event.’—Gordon’s *Hist. of the Am. Revolution*, Vol. I. p. 136.

* Appendix to Sparks’s Life and Correspondence of Washington.

As early as the year 1774, Dr. Franklin began to talk of a "*total emancipation*," or independence. — *Memoir of Josiah Quincy, Jr.* p. 250. And Mr. Wirt represents Patrick Henry, as uttering the same sentiment anterior to the meeting of the first Continental Congress. Yet the manner in which it was received by his hearers indicates, that it was to them a novel and unexpected doctrine; "at the word *independence* the company appeared to be startled, for they had never heard any thing of the kind before even suggested." — *Life of Patrick Henry*, p. 94.

Washington, in his letter to Captain Mackenzie, denies, as we have seen, in very strong terms, that such was the design of any persons, so far as his knowledge extended. No man, perhaps, was better informed on the subject, by mingling in the society of others; and it may hence be confidently inferred, that the topic of independence was not openly broached by the members of the first Congress, even in their private discourse among themselves. That he and his immediate friends had no such object in view is manifest, from a clause in the *Fairfax County Resolves*, passed on the 18th of July preceding, at a public meeting over which he presided. It is there stated "as a cause of complaint, 'that the British ministry are artfully prejudicing our sovereign, and inflaming the minds of our fellow-subjects in Great Britain, by propagating the most malevolent falsehoods, *particularly that there is an intention in the American colonies to set up for independent states.*' It was the opinion of Washington, and of the framers of these resolves, that the colonies had the power, by withholding their support of British commerce, to inflict so much

distress on the people of Great Britain, as to rouse the government to a sense of the colonial wrongs, and produce a speedy change in their measures. And it was moreover supposed, that spirited resolutions, showing the almost universal sense of the people, that the acts of the British Parliament in regard to them were oppressive and unjust, would tend to hasten so desirable a result. Such were no doubt the views entertained by all classes of people, and the motives actuating them in the primary movements of the revolution.

The historical interest attaching to this point, induced Mr. Sparks to obtain from Mr. Madison, an intelligent and valuable authority, his opinion as to the popular feeling respecting it, and also as to that of the political leaders of the day : his views are contained in the following letter, dated January 5th, 1828.

“ You wish me to say whether I believe, ‘ that at the beginning of the revolution, or at the assembling of the first Congress, the leaders of that day were resolved on independence.’ I readily express my entire belief, that they were not ; though I must admit, that my means of information were more limited, than may have been the case with others still living to answer the inquiry. My first entrance on public life was in May, 1776, when I became a member of the Convention in Virginia, which instructed her delegates in Congress to propose the Declaration of Independence. Previous to that date I was not in sufficient communication with any under the denomination of leaders, to learn their sentiments, or views, on that cardinal subject.

“ I can only say, therefore, that so far as ever came to my knowledge, no one of them ever

avowed, or was understood to entertain a pursuit of independence, at the assembling of the first Congress, or for a considerable period thereafter. It has always been my impression, that a re-establishment of the colonial relations to the parent country, as they were previous to the controversy, was the real object of every class of the people, till despair of obtaining it, and the exasperating effects of the war, and the manner of conducting it, prepared the minds of all for the event declared on the 4th of July, 1776, as preferable, with all its difficulties and perils, to the alternative of submission to a claim of power, at once external, unlimited, irresponsible, and under every temptation to abuse from interest, ambition, and revenge. If there were individuals, who aimed at independence, their views must have been confined to their own bosoms, or to a very confidential circle.

“It was the belief, before the meeting of the Congress, particularly of the more cautious and moderate, that petitions to the King and Parliament by a body of representatives assembled from all parts of the colonies, would be respected, and in the end procure redress. They, on the contrary, who, like Washington, had no confidence in the success of this measure, looked forward to the probable issue of arms, but still without any other anticipations than, by a resolute vindication of their rights, to effect a change in the conduct and policy of the British government, and restore the colonies to their former condition. It was not till these petitions were rejected with a show of indifference, if not of contempt, that the eyes of all were opened to the necessity of unconditional submission, or united resistance. From that time the word *inde-*

pendence was boldly pronounced, and soon became a familiar sound to the ears of the whole people.

On the 10th of November, 1775, Mr. Richard Penn, who had been governor of Pennsylvania, and had left Philadelphia in the preceding July, was examined before the House of Lords, while the petition from Congress, which had been brought over and presented by Mr. Penn, in conjunction with the agents for the colonies, was under discussion. The following questions and answers occur in the examination.

“ *Question.* Are you personally acquainted with many of the members of Congress ?

“ *Answer.* I am acquainted with almost all the members of the Congress.

“ *Quest.* Do you think they levy and carry on this war for the purpose of establishing an *independent empire* ?

“ *Ans.* I think they do not carry on the war for independency. I never heard them breathe sentiments of that nature.

“ “ *Quest.* For what purpose do you believe they have taken up arms ?

“ “ *Ans.* In defence of their liberties.’ ” — *Parliamentary Debates, November, 1775.*

It is quite natural to suppose that there would be some few individuals of whom these remarks would not be true ; and who would, in the boldness of their views, anticipate the resolution of their countrymen. Such a man was John Adams, and it is a curious fact, that the ministers had at this moment in their hands two intercepted letters from his pen which expressed sentiments quite at variance with the testimony of the witness. These

letters were dated on the 24th of July, only two weeks later than the petition to the King, taken to England by Mr. Penn, which was approved in Congress on the 8th. They were intercepted in crossing the ferry at Newport, and sent on board Admiral Graves's fleet, whence they found their way to Lord Dartmouth. The originals are now in the State Paper Office. One of these letters was from Mr. Adams to his wife, in which he said—

“ The business I have had on my mind has been as great and important, as can be entrusted to one man, and the difficulty and intricacy of it are prodigious. When fifty or sixty men have a constitution to form for a great empire, at the same time that they have a country of fifteen hundred miles in extent to fortify, millions to arm and train, a naval power to begin, an extensive commerce to regulate, numerous tribes of Indians to negotiate with, a standing army of twenty-seven thousand men to raise, pay, victual, and officer, I really shall pity those fifty or sixty men.”

The other letter was to James Warren, at that time Speaker of the Massachusetts Assembly, and contained the following declarations :—

“ We ought to have had in our hands a month ago the whole legislative, executive, and judicial power of the whole continent, and have completely modelled a constitution ; to have raised a naval power and opened all our ports wide ; to have arrested every friend to government on the continent, and held them as hostages for the poor victims in Boston ; and then opened the door as wide as possible for peace and reconciliation. After this, they might

have petitioned, and negociated, and addressed, if they would. Is all this extravagant? Is it wild? Is it not the soundest policy?"

With sentiments like these, coming from a prominent member of Congress, it is no wonder that the ministry should be puzzled to reconcile the doctrines and assertions of the petition to the King, in which that body express their loyalty, and desire an opportunity 'of evincing the sincerity of their professions, by every testimony of devotion becoming the most dutiful subjects and the most affectionate colonists.' No charge of insincerity, however, can attach to Mr. Adams. It is well known, that he had little sympathy with the party, who insisted on this last petition, and that he and others yielded to their associates, with the view of preserving peace and harmony within the walls of Congress, as the only means of ultimate union and success. At this stage of affairs they hoped nothing from petitions, and anticipated a remedy of evils from no other source, than strong and determined measures on the part of the representatives of the people. Whatever may have been the opinions or wishes of other members of Congress, it is hardly possible that Mr. Adams could have written the above letters without looking forward at least to the possibility of a speedy separation, and an independent form of government. The fact of their being in the hands of the ministry, when the petition came under the notice of Parliament, may serve as a key to some of the proceedings on the subject.

In tracing this matter farther, we shall find the opinions of Washington, Madison, and Penn, in regard to a scheme of independence among the colonists anterior to the beginning of the revolution,

confirmed by other testimony of the highest order. In a letter, which Dr. Franklin wrote to his son, dated March 22nd, 1775, he relates a conversation he had held in the August preceding with Lord Chatham, in which that statesman spoke of the prevailing belief in England, that the colonies aimed at setting themselves up as an independent state. 'I assured him,' said Franklin, 'that having more than once travelled almost from one end of the continent to the other, and kept a great variety of company, eating, drinking, and conversing with them freely, I never had heard in any conversation from any person, drunk or sober, the least expression of a wish for a separation, or a hint that such a thing would be advantageous to America.' — *Franklin's Works*, vol. i. p. 278.

"Again, Mr. Jay, remarking on certain parts of Botta's History of the American Revolution, in a letter to Mr. Otis, January 13th, 1821, thus expressed himself. 'During the course of my life, and until after the second petition of Congress, in 1755, I never did hear an American of any class, or of any description, express a wish for the independence of the colonies.' 'It has always been, and still is my opinion and belief, that our country was prompted and impelled to independence by *necessity*, and not by *choice*. They, who know how we were then circumstanced, know from whence that necessity resulted.' — *Life of John Jay*, vol. ii. p. 412.

"We have likewise the opinions, uttered on the same occasion, of two other persons not less qualified to judge, than any that have been mentioned. — 'That there existed a general desire of independence of the crown,' says Mr. John Adams, 'in

any part of America, before the revolution, is as far from the truth as the zenith from the nadir.' 'For my own part, there was not a moment during the revolution, when I would not have given every thing I possessed for a restoration to the state of things before the contest began, provided we could have had a sufficient security for its continuance.'"

—*Ibid.* p. 416.

And Mr. Jefferson affirmed,—“What, eastward of New York, might have been the dispositions towards England before the commencement of hostilities, I know not; before that I never had heard a whisper of a disposition to separate from Great Britain; and after that, its possibility was contemplated with affliction by all.”—*Ibid.* p. 417.

This mass of testimony, derived from separate sources, coincident in every particular, vouched by the first names in American history, and the principal actors in producing a separation, is perfectly conclusive on this point. It is moreover established, as Mr. Jay has remarked, by all the public documents and proceedings of the colonial legislatures, in which assurances of loyalty and allegiance are uniform and cordial. Any opinion, therefore, that the spirit of independence had an early origin, and a progressive growth, with a direct aim to a separation, or the prospect of such an event, must be a mere inference, sanctioned only by the circumstances of the free institutions of the colonies, and the tendency of a people under such institutions to self-government and a system independent of foreign controul.

The following curious and characteristic letter from John Adams to Richard Henry Lee was

written in Congress, November 15th, 1775, nearly eight months before the declaration of independence. A copy was taken from the original by a merchant in Virginia, and forwarded to his friend in Glasgow, by whom it was transmitted to the British ministry. It is now in the State Paper Office:—

“The course of events,” says Mr. Adams, “naturally turns the thoughts of gentlemen in common to the subjects of legislation and jurisprudence; and it is a current problem, what form of government is most readily and easily adopted by a colony upon a sudden emergency. Nature and experience have already pointed out a solution of this problem in the choice of conventions and committees of safety. Nothing is wanting, in addition to these, to make a complete government, but the choice of magistrates for the administration of justice. Taking nature and experience for my guide, I have formed the following sketch, which may be varied in any one particular an infinite number of ways, so as to accommodate it to the genius, temper, principles, and even prejudices of different people.

“A legislative, executive, and judicial power comprehends the whole of what is meant and understood by government. It is by balancing each of these powers against the other two, that the effort in human nature towards tyranny can alone be checked and restrained, and any degree of freedom preserved in the constitution.

“Let a full and free representation be chosen for a house of commons. Let the house choose by ballot twelve, sixteen, twenty-four, or twenty-eight persons, either members of the house, or from the people at large, as the electors please, for a council.

Let the house and council by joint ballot choose a governor annually, or septennially, as you like. Let the governor, council, and house be each a distinct and independent branch of legislation, and have a negative on all laws. Let the lieutenant-governor, secretary, commissary, attorney-general, and solicitor-general, be chosen annually by joint ballot of both houses. Let the governor, with seven counsellors, be a quorum. Let all officers and magistrates, civil and military, be nominated and appointed by the governor, by and with the advice and consent of his council. Let no officers be appointed but by a general council. Let the judges, at least of the superior court, be incapacitated by law from holding any share in the legislative or executive powers, and let their commissions be during good behaviour, and their salaries ascertained and established by law. Let the governor have the command of the army, militia, forts. Let the colony have a seal, and affix it to all commissions.

“In this way, a single month is sufficient, without the least convulsion or animosity, to accomplish a total revolution. If it is thought more beneficial, a law may be made by the new legislature, leaving to the people at large the privilege of choosing their governor and council annually, as soon as matters get into a more quiet course. Adopting a plan similar to this, human nature will appear in its proper glory, asserting its own real dignity, putting down tyrannies at a single exertion, and erecting such new fabrics, as it thinks best calculated to promote its happiness.’”

CHAPTER XI.

First Acts of the American Congress—Their Address to the People of England—To His Majesty—To the American People—Acts of the British Parliament—Opposition of Lord Chatham—Lord North's Attempt to effect Disunion in the American Provinces.

IF any other evidence were necessary to show that the first American congress assembled with an almost universal desire to heal, and not to widen the breach between the colonies and the parent state, it would be found in the measures they first adopted, and which were so important, so characteristic, and so conclusive upon many points of party discussion, as to claim the attentive consideration of the historical student.

One of their first acts was to enter into a unanimous declaration of rights; in which they protest against the various acts passed during the few last years, for the purpose of taxing and interfering with the charter of various colonies as an infringement and violation of those rights; and then bind themselves and their constituents to the minute observance of a series of agreements, calculated to cut off all commercial intercourse between themselves and Great Britain, till redress of their grievances had been obtained. They then, on behalf of themselves and their constituents, recorded their united and cordial thanks to those truly noble and patriotic advocates of civil and

religious liberty, who had defended the cause of America in the Parliament of England.

Their next step was to frame a petition to the King, a memorial to the people of Great Britain, an address to their constituents at large, and another to the inhabitants of the province of Quebec. These documents are prepared with great ability, and breathe throughout a spirit of loyalty, magnanimity, and inflexible resolution.

“When,” say they, in their address to the people of Great Britain*, “a nation led to greatness by the hand of liberty, and possessed of all the glory that heroism, munificence, and humanity can bestow, descends to the ungrateful task of forging chains for her friends and children; and, instead of giving support to freedom, turns advocate for slavery and oppression, there is reason to suspect, she has either ceased to be virtuous, or been extremely negligent in the appointment of her rulers.

“In almost every age, in repeated conflicts, in long and bloody wars, as well civil as foreign, against many and powerful nations, against the open assaults of enemies, and the more dangerous treachery of friends; have the inhabitants of your island, your great and glorious ancestors, maintained their independence, and transmitted the rights of men, and the blessings of liberty to you, their posterity.

“Be not surprised, therefore, that we, who are descended from the same common ancestors, that we, whose forefathers participated in all the rights, the liberties, and the constitution you so justly

* Judge Marshall's Life of Washington.

boast of, and who have carefully conveyed the same fair inheritance to us, guaranteed by the plighted faith of government, and the most solemn compact with British sovereigns, should refuse to surrender them to men, who found their claims on no principles of reason, and who prosecute them with a design, that, by having *our* lives and property in their power, they may with the greater facility enslave *you*."

After stating the serious condition of American affairs, and that not only the oppressions, but the misrepresentations of their country, had induced this address; after stating that they claim to be as free as their fellow-subjects in Britain, they say, "are not the proprietors of the soil of Great Britain lords of their own property? Can it be taken from them without their consent? Will they yield it to the arbitrary disposal of any men or number of men whatever? You know they will not.

"Why then are the proprietors of the soil of America less lords of their property than you are of yours; or why should they submit it to the disposal of your parliament, or any other parliament or council in the world, not of their election? Can the intervention of the sea that divides us cause disparity in rights; or, can any reason be given why English subjects, who live three thousand miles from the royal palace, should enjoy less liberty than those who are three hundred miles distant from it?

"Reason looks with indignation on such distinctions, and freemen can never perceive their propriety."

"At the conclusion of the late war—a war rendered glorious by the abilities and integrity of a minister, to whose efforts the British empire owes

its safety and its fame, at the conclusion of this war, which was succeeded by an inglorious peace, formed under the auspices of a minister, of principles and of a family unfriendly to the Protestant cause, and inimical to liberty;—we say at this period, and under the influence of that man, a plan for enslaving your fellow-subjects in America was concerted, and has ever since been pertinaciously carrying into execution.”

The former relative situation of the two countries is then stated, and they are reminded of the loyalty and attachment of the colonists to the common interests of the empire. The transactions since the conclusion of the war are passed in solemn review, and they add, “This being a true state of facts, let us beseech you to consider to what end they lead.

“Admit that the ministry, by the powers of Britain, and the aid of our Roman Catholic neighbours, should be able to carry the point of taxation, and reduce us to a state of perfect humiliation and slavery; such an enterprise would, doubtless, make some addition to your national debt, which already presses down your liberties, and fills you with pensioners and placemen. We presume also, that your commerce will somewhat be diminished. However, suppose you should prove victorious, in what condition will you then be? What advantages or what laurels will you reap from such a conquest? May not a ministry with the same armies enslave you?”

The resources which the subjugation of America would place in the hands of the crown are then expatiated on, and the address proceeds—“We believe there is yet much virtue, much justice,

much public spirit in the English nation. To that justice we now appeal. You have been told that we are seditious, impatient of government, and desirous of independency. Be assured that these are not facts, but calumnies. Permit us to be as free as yourselves, and we shall ever esteem a union with you to be our greatest glory, and our greatest happiness. We shall ever be ready to contribute all in our power to the welfare of the empire. We shall consider your enemies as our enemies, and your interest as our own.

“But, if you are determined that your ministers shall wantonly sport with the rights of mankind—if neither the voice of justice, the dictates of the law, the principles of the constitution, nor the suggestions of humanity, can restrain your hands from shedding human blood in such an impious cause; we must then tell you, that we will never submit to be hewers of wood, nor drawers of water, for any ministry or nation in the world.

“Place us in the same situation that we were at the close of the last war, and our former harmony will be restored.”

The petition to the King states succinctly the grievances complained of, and then proceeds:—
“Had our Creator been pleased to give us existence in a land of slavery, the sense of our condition might have been mitigated by ignorance and habit. But thanks be to his adorable goodness, we were born the heirs of freedom, and ever enjoyed our right under the auspices of your royal ancestors, whose family was seated on the British throne, to rescue and secure a pious and gallant nation from the popery and despotism of a superstitious and inexorable tyrant. Your Majesty, we are con-

fidant, justly rejoices, that your title to the crown is thus founded on the title of your people to liberty; and, therefore, we doubt not but your royal wisdom must approve the sensibility that teaches your subjects anxiously to guard the blessing they receive from Divine Providence, and thereby to prove the performance of that compact, which elevated the illustrious House of Brunswick to the imperial dignity it now possesses.

“The apprehension of being degraded into a state of servitude from the pre-eminent rank of English freemen, while our minds retain the strongest love of liberty, and clearly foresee the miseries preparing for us, and for our posterity, excites emotions in our breasts, which, though we cannot describe, we should not wish to conceal. Feeling as men, and thinking as subjects, in the manner we do, silence would be disloyalty. By giving this faithful information, we do all in our power to promote the great objects of your royal cares, the tranquillity of your government, and the welfare of your people.

“Duty to your Majesty, and regard for the preservation of ourselves and our posterity,—the primary obligations of nature and society, command us to entreat your royal attention; and, as your Majesty enjoys the signal distinction of reigning over freemen, we apprehend the language of freemen cannot be displeasing. Your royal indignation, we hope, will rather fall on those designing and dangerous men, who daringly interposing themselves between your royal person and your faithful subjects, and for several years past incessantly employed to dissolve the bonds of society, by abusing your Majesty's authority, misrepresenting your Ame-

rican subjects, and prosecuting the most desperate and irritating projects of oppression, have at length compelled us, by the force of accumulated injuries, too severe to be any longer tolerable, to disturb your Majesty's repose by our complaints.

"These sentiments are extorted from hearts that much more willingly would bleed in your Majesty's service. Yet so greatly have we been misrepresented, that a necessity has been alleged of taking our property from us without our consent, 'to defray the charge of the administration of justice, the support of civil government, and the defence, protection, and security of the colonies.'"

After assuring his Majesty of the untruth of these allegations, they say:—"Yielding to no British subjects in affectionate attachment to your Majesty's person, family, and government, we too dearly prize the privilege of expressing that attachment, by those proofs that are honourable to the prince that receives them, and to the people who give them, ever to resign it to any body of men upon earth.

"We ask but for peace, liberty, and safety. We wish not a diminution of the prerogative, nor do we solicit the grant of any new right in our favour; your royal authority over us, and our connection with Great Britain, we shall always carefully and zealously endeavour to support and maintain."

"After re-stating in a very affecting manner the most essential grievances of which they complain, and professing that their future conduct, if their apprehensions should be removed, would prove them not unworthy the regard they had been accustomed, in their happier days, to enjoy; after

appealing to that Being who searches the hearts of his creatures, to witness to their solemn profession, that their councils have been influenced by no other motives than a dread of impending destruction, they add :—

“ Permit us, then, most gracious sovereign, in the name of all your faithful people in America, with the utmost humility to implore you, for the honour of Almighty God, whose pure religion our enemies are undermining ; for your glory, which can be advanced only by rendering your subjects happy, and keeping them united ; for the interests of your family, depending on the principles which enthroned it ; for the safety and welfare of your kingdom and dominions, threatened with almost unavoidable dangers and distresses ; that your Majesty, as the loving father of your whole people, connected by the same bonds of law, loyalty, faith, and blood, though dwelling in various countries, will not suffer the transcendant relations, formed by these ties, to be further violated, in uncertain expectation of effects that, if attained, never can compensate for the calamities through which they must be gained.”

The address to their constituents is replete with serious and temperate argument. In this paper, the several causes which had led to the existing state of things were detailed more at large, and much labour was used thoroughly to convince their judgments, that their liberties must be destroyed, and the security of their property and persons annihilated, by submission to the pretensions of Great Britain. Their greatest object being to unite the people of America, by demonstrating to them the sincerity with which their

leaders had sought for reconciliation, on terms compatible with liberty; the conduct of the colonists was contended to have been uniformly moderate, and entirely exempt from blame, while the system of administration was treated as equally dangerous to them all, although it insidiously professed to be particularly aimed at Massachusetts. They stated the measures, and after having declared their confidence, that the mode of commercial resistance, which had been recommended, would prove efficacious if persisted in with fidelity and virtue, they concluded with saying:—

“Your own salvation, and that of your posterity, now depends upon yourselves. You have already shown that you entertain a proper sense of the blessings you are striving to retain against the temporary inconvenience you may suffer from a stoppage of trade; you will weigh in the opposite balance, the endless miseries you and your descendants must endure from an established arbitrary power; you will not forget the honour of your country, that must, from your behaviour, take its title, in the estimation of the world, to glory or to shame; and you will, with the deepest attention, reflect, that if the peaceable mode of opposition, recommended by us, be broken and rendered ineffectual, as your cruel and haughty ministerial enemies, from a contemptuous opinion of your firmness, insolently predict will be the case, you must inevitably be reduced to choose either a more dangerous contest, or a final, infamous, and ruinous submission.

“Motives thus cogent, arising from the emergency of your unhappy condition, must excite your utmost diligence and zeal to give all possible

strength and energy to the pacific measures calculated for your relief. But we think ourselves bound in duty to observe to you, that the schemes agitated against these colonies have been so conducted, as to render it prudent that you should extend your views to mournful events, and be in all respects prepared for every contingency. Above all things, we earnestly entreat you, with devotion of spirit, penitence of heart, and amendment of life, to humble yourselves, and implore the favour of Almighty God; and we fervently beseech his divine goodness to take you into his gracious protection."

These proceedings on the part of the congress, were viewed throughout America with enthusiastic admiration. Though they claimed no authority as a legislative assembly, yet their resolutions were almost unanimously received as the most binding enactments. A thorough conviction of the rectitude of their cause, awakened the whole community to the most vigorous exertions. Independent military companies were formed throughout the provinces, and a presentiment of an approaching war universally prevailed. The address of congress to the King, arrived in England when his Majesty was meeting a new Parliament. In the speech from the throne it was announced "that a most daring spirit of resistance and disobedience to the laws unhappily prevailed in the colony of Massachusetts;" and the intended means of overcoming it, were distinctly indicated. A short delay, however, occurred before active measures were adopted, and hopes were still entertained by the friends of American liberty. Lord Chatham still lived. "That

splendid orb had not yet set for ever. The western horizon yet blazed with his descending glory*," and in the house of Peers, to which he had now been elevated, he once more threw the whole force of his irresistible eloquence into the balance which was now vibrating between peace and war.

He began with a motion, for withdrawing the royal forces from Boston. He told the house, that, in this distracted situation of affairs, he had crawled thither, to offer them the best of his experience and advice. He urged the necessity of the step he had recommended, as the means of opening a way for settling the dangerous troubles in America, by beginning to allay ferments, and soften animosities there. He said, an hour now lost, might produce years of calamity. His object was, to put his foot upon the threshold of peace. His present motion was only the introduction to a comprehensive plan ; and he pledged himself to the house, that he would not desert for a moment the conduct of this mighty business. Unless nailed to his bed by the extremity of sickness, he would give it his unremitted attention ; he would knock at the door of a sleeping and confounded ministry, and rouse them to a sense of their important danger.

He described the situation of the troops at Boston, as truly unworthy, being penned up, and pining in inglorious inactivity. He called them, an army of impotence and contempt ; and, to make the folly equal to the disgrace, they were an army of irritation. " You irritate your colonies to unappeasable rancour. It is not repealing this, or that act of parliament ; not the annihilation of a

* Burke.

few dirty shreds of parchment, that can restore America to your bosom. You must repeal her fears, and her resentments ; and you may then hope for her love and gratitude."

He was lavish in his praises of the congress :—

"For myself," he said, "I must avow, that in all my reading and observation :—and I have read Thucydides ; and have studied and admired the master states of the world :—I find nothing recorded in antiquity more honourable—more respectable, than this despised meeting. It has been in circulation, that, if the stamp act had never been repealed, we should at this hour, have been at peace and quietness with America ; and from this, many people urge the danger, as well as inefficacy of conciliating measures at present. I know, on the contrary, from the most respectable authority, that these were at [that instant, the prevalent and steady principles of America : that you might destroy their towns, might cut them off from the superfluities, and even the conveniences of life ; but that they were prepared to despise your power, and would not lament their loss, while they had,—what, my lords ?—their woods, and their liberty.

"Do you think, that men, who could be roused to forego their profits, their pleasures, and the peaceable enjoyment of their dearest connections, all for the sake of liberty, will be whipped into vassalage, like slaves ? Why, this conduct in government, is so fantastical and aerial in practice, that it, by far, exceeds the boldest wing of poetry ; for poetry has often read instructive, as well as

pleasing lessons to mankind ; and, though she sometimes amuse herself in fiction, that fiction, to please, should be founded in verisimilitude. But, in this system, there is nothing like truth ; nothing like policy ; nothing like justice, experience, or common sense.

“ We shall be forced ultimately to retract : let us retract, while we can do it with honour. These violent, oppressive acts must be repealed. I pledge myself for it, that you will, in the end, repeal them. I stake my reputation upon it. I will consent to be taken for an idiot, if they are not finally repealed. The cause of America is allied to every true whig. This glorious spirit animates three millions of men in our colonies. What shall oppose this spirit ? aided by the congenial flame, glowing in the breast of every whig in England, to the amount, I hope, of double the American numbers. Ireland they have to a man. Nay, what dependence can you have upon your soldiery, the unhappy instruments of your wrath. They are Englishmen, who must feel for the privileges of Englishmen ; and their carrying muskets and bayonets about them, surely does not exclude them from the pale of civil community. Foreign war hangs over your heads, by a slight and brittle thread. France and Spain are watching your conduct, and waiting for the maturity of your errors.

“ ‘ But you are anxious, who should disarm first ? The great poet, and perhaps a greater politician, than ever he was a poet, has given you the wisest counsel ; follow it.

“ Tuque prior, tu parce ; genus qui ducis Oylmpo ;
Projice tela manu.

“ ‘ With a dignity becoming your exalted situation, make the first advances to concord, to peace and happiness ; for that is your true dignity, to act with prudence and with justice.’ ”

“ The noble earl concluded his animated harangue in the following emphatical manner. ‘ My lords, if the ministers thus persevere in misadvising and misleading the king, I will not say that they can alienate the affections of his subjects from his crown ; but I will affirm, that they will make the crown not worth his wearing. I will not say that the king is betrayed ; but I will affirm that the kingdom is undone.’ ”

But his efforts were in vain. A decisive step was taken on the 9th of February, 1775, when a joint address of both houses of Parliament was presented to the King, which declared that “ a rebellion actually existed in the province of Massachusetts.” Upon this an addition was voted to the military and naval force, and an act was passed to restrain the commerce of the Eastern colonies with Great Britain and her West Indian dependencies. At the same time an act was passed, declaring that Parliament would forbear to tax any colony which should tax itself to such an amount as government might deem satisfactory. The object of this procedure Lord North himself stated, in the following words :—“ If it does no good in the colonies, it will do good here ; it will unite the people of England by holding out to them a distinct object of revenue.” He added further, “ As it tends to unite England it is likely to disunite America, for if only one province accept the offer, their con-

federacy, which alone makes them formidable, will be broken."

The bill which was thus unblushingly advocated passed into a law, and was received throughout America with that mingled indignation and derision which it and its author so abundantly deserved.

CHAPTER XII.

Mr. Burke's celebrated Motion for Conciliation with America—Analysis of his Arguments—Defeat of the Measure—Effects of this Event in the Colonies—Violent Opposition to Government in Boston—General Gage seizes Stores of Powder, &c.—The Provincials make Reprisals—Attempt to seize the United Stores of the Insurgents at Concord.

AT the commencement of the year 1775, the affairs of the American colonies and the parent government were assuming daily a more gloomy and threatening aspect. It became increasingly evident that whatever could be done to avert the horrors of war should be attempted instantly, and, impressed with these sentiments, Mr. Burke, on the 22nd of March, brought forward his motion for conciliation with America, and supported it with, perhaps, the most extraordinary effort of his oratorical powers. The general tendency of this address may be learned from the language of Mr. Fox respecting it.

“Let gentlemen,” says he, “read this speech by day, and meditate upon it by night; let them peruse it again and again, study it, imprint it on their minds, impress it on their hearts. They would there learn that representation was the sovereign remedy for every evil.”

In the composition and delivery of this address,

Mr. Burke's sense of the vast importance of the crisis, seems to have induced him to restrain the play of his fancy, and to betake himself to the demonstration of facts which he well knew that many could understand who were utterly incapable of comprehending the principles from which they resulted. Occasionally, however, his ever active imagination would forcibly disengage itself from its unwonted constraint, and show its resistless energy in passages, which, for their originality and eloquence, are scarcely to be equalled in any of his published compositions.

After showing that the tendency of all previous measures had been to maintain agitation and discontent in the American provinces, he developed the general character of his own proposal in the following words :—

“ My proposition is peace ; not peace through the medium of war ; not peace to be hunted through the labyrinth of intricate and endless negotiations ; not peace to arise out of universal discord, fomented from principle in all parts of the empire ; not peace to depend on the judicial determination of perplexing questions, or the precise marking the shadowy boundaries of a complex government. It is simple peace ; sought in its natural course, in its ordinary haunts. It is peace sought in the spirit of peace, and laid in principles purely pacific. I propose by removing the ground of the difference, and by restoring the former unsuspecting confidence of the colonies in the mother country, to give permanent satisfaction to your people ; and (far from the scheme of ruling by discord) to reconcile them to each other in

the same act, and by the bond of the very same interest, which reconciles them to British government."

After laying down and enforcing the position that the plan for reconciliation ought in consideration of her political superiority to emanate from Great Britain, Mr. Burke argued that it should not be determined by any abstract theory, but by a regard to circumstances. The first to which he refers is their commerce; and here he shows by documentary evidence that where, as in the beginning of the century, of twelve millions which constituted the whole mass of the export trade of Great Britain, the colonial trade constituted but one twelfth part, it appeared that it now amounted to considerably more than a third of the whole sixteen millions.

He next passed to their agriculture and fisheries :—

"This," said he, of the former, "they have cultivated with such a spirit, that besides feeding plentifully their own growing multitude, their annual export of grain, comprehending rice, has some years ago exceeded a million in value. Of their late harvests I am persuaded they will export much more. At the beginning of the century, some of those colonies imported corn from the mother country. For some time past the old world has been fed from the new. The scarcity which you have felt would have been a desolating famine, if this child of your old age, with a true filial piety, with a Roman charity, had not put the full breast of its youthful exuberance to the mouth of its exhausted parent."

“As to the wealth which the colonies have drawn from the sea by their fisheries, you had all that matter fully opened at your bar. You surely thought those acquisitions of value, for they seemed to excite your envy ; and yet the spirit by which that enterprising employment has been exercised, ought rather in my opinion to have raised your esteem and admiration. And pray, Sir, what in the world is equal to it. Pass by the other parts, and look at the manner in which the people of New England have of late carried on the whale fishery. Whether we follow them amongst tumbling mountains of ice, and behold them penetrating into the deepest frozen recesses of Hudson’s Bay and Davis’s Straits, whilst we are looking for them beneath the Arctic circle, we hear that they have pierced into the opposite region of polar cold, that they are at the Antipodes, and engaged under the frozen Serpent of the South. Falkland Island, which seemed too remote and romantic an object for the grasp of national ambition, is but a stage and resting-place in the progress of their victorious industry. Nor is the equinoctial heat more discouraging to them than the accumulated winter of both the poles. We know that whilst some of them draw the line and strike the harpoon on the coast of Africa, others run the longitude, and pursue their gigantic game on the coast of Brazil. No sea but what is vexed by their fisheries, no climate that is not witness to their toil. Neither the perseverance of Holland, nor the activity of France, nor the dexterous and firm sagacity of English enterprise, ever carried this most perilous mode of hard industry to the extent to which it has been pushed by this recent people, a people

who are still as it were in the gristle, and not yet hardened into the bone of manhood. When I contemplate these things, when I know that the colonies in general owe little or nothing to any care of ours, and that they are not squeezed into this happy form by the constraints of watchful and suspicious government, but that through a wise and salutary neglect a generous nature has been suffered to take her own way to perfection, when I reflect upon these effects—when I see how profitable they have been to us, I feel all the pride of power sink, and all presumption in the wisdom of human contrivances melt and die away within me. My rigour relents. I pardon something to the spirit of liberty.”

“But,” continued Mr. Burke, “some persons will say such a country is worth fighting for. True, but fighting will not retain it.” Force he argued was uncertain, and, if successful, would depreciate the object gained. He then warned the house against supposing that success was highly probable. He argued that the probable success of their efforts was derived from their jealousy of their liberties which they inherited from their British origin, that it was cherished and increased by their popular representation, and added, “if anything were wanting to this necessary operation of the form of government, religion would have given it a complete effect.”

“Religion, always a principle of energy, in this new people is no way worn out or impaired; and their mode of professing it is also one main cause of this free spirit. The people are protestants, and of that kind which is the most adverse to all implicit submission of mind and opinion. This is

a persuasion not only favourable to liberty, but built upon it. I do not think, Sir, that the reason of this averseness in the dissenting churches, from all that looks like absolute government, is so much to be sought in their religious tenets as in their history. Every one knows that the Roman catholic religion is at least coeval with most of the governments where it prevails, that it has generally gone hand in hand with them, and received great favour and every kind of support from authority. The Church of England, too, was formed from her cradle under the nursing care of regular government. But the dissenting interests have sprung up in direct opposition to all the ordinary powers of the world, and could justify that opposition only on a strong claim to natural liberty. Their very existence depended on the powerful and unremitted assertion of that claim. All protestantism, even the most cold and passive, is a sort of dissent. But the religion most prevalent in our northern colonies is a refinement on the principle of resistance. It is the dissidence of dissent, and the protestantism of the protestant religion."

A further reason adduced by Mr. Burke, for that spirit of liberty in the colonies which discouraged all hope of successful opposition to their claims, was their distance from the mother country. This happens," said he, "in all forms into which empire can be thrown. In large bodies the circulation of power must be less vigorous at the extremities; nor farther," he argues, "does the nature of their education tend in a less degree to this result." "In no country perhaps in the world is the law so general a study. *Abeunt studia in mores.* This study renders men acute, inquisitive,

dexterous, prompt in attack, ready in defence, full of resources. In other countries, the people, more simple, and of a less mercurial cast, judge of an ill principle in government only by an actual grievance. Here they anticipate the evil, and judge of the pressure of the grievance by the badness of the principle. They augur misgovernment at a distance, and snuff the approach of tyranny in every tainted breeze.

“A proud spirit of liberty having from these various causes been infused throughout the colonies ; in consequence of which they have not only disobeyed our authority, but established an efficient authority of their own ; by whose means a vast province has subsisted for nearly a twelvemonth, without governor, without public council, without judges, without executive magistrates, the question arises, how is this spirit to be encountered ? Some politicians have in this emergency proposed to check the population of the colonies, by stopping the grant of more land from the crown. But,” said he, “the only effect of this avarice of desolation, this hoarding of a royal wilderness, would be to raise the value of the possessions in the hands of the great private monopolists, without any adequate check to the growing and alarming mischief of population.”

“Others have advised that their maritime enterprise should be checked by the severity of restrictive laws. Whilst a third class of counsellors are sanguine in their expectations that the Virginians and the planters of the Carolinas will be reduced to submission by the emancipation of their slaves. Some again went so far as to talk of prosecuting the refractory as criminals,” a proposal

which Mr. Burke shrewdly confessed, was “a great deal too big for his ideas of jurisprudence.”

After demonstrating the futility of these empirical suggestions, Mr. Burke urged that the only method left was that of conciliation. This he explained to mean the admission of the colonies to an interest in the constitution. To demonstrate the efficiency of this sovereign remedy, he adduced the instances of Ireland, of Wales, and of the counties palatine of Chester and Durham. He advocated a similar policy towards America to that which had been exercised towards them. “In her case,” said he, “let taxation and representation go hand in hand.”

“You will now, Sir, perhaps imagine that I am on the point of proposing to you a scheme for the representation of the colonies in Parliament. Perhaps I might be inclined to entertain some such thought, but a great flood stops me in my course—*opposuit natura*, I cannot remove the eternal barriers of the creation.”—“Fortunately I am not obliged for the ways and means of this substitute to tax my own unproductive invention. I am not even obliged to go to the rich treasury of the fertile framers of imaginary commonwealths, not to the republic of Plato, not to the Utopia of More, not to the Oceana of Harrington. It is before me, it is at my feet, *and the rude swain treads daily on it with his clouted shoon*. I only wish you to recognise for the theory, the ancient constitutional policy of this kingdom, with regard to representation; and, as to the practice, to return to that mode which an uniform experience has marked out to you as best; and in which you walked with security, advantage, and honour, until

the year 1763. My resolutions mean to establish the equity and justice of a taxation of America by *grant*, and not by *imposition*. To mark the *legal competency* of the colonial assemblies, for the support of their government in peace, and for public aids in time of war, — to acknowledge that this legal competency has had a dutiful and beneficial exercise; and that experience has shewn the benefit of their grants, and the futility of parliamentary taxation as a method of supply.”

After the most eloquent enforcement of this principle, and after drawing it out into a number of distinct propositions, Mr. Burke concluded with moving the first of them in these words:—
“In full confidence of this unalterable truth, I now (*quod felix faustumque sit*) lay the first stone of the temple of peace; and I move you:—

“That the colonies and plantations of Great Britain in North America, consisting of fourteen separate governments, and containing two millions and upwards of free inhabitants, have not had the liberty and privilege of electing and sending any knights and burgesses or others to represent them in the high court of Parliament.”

Upon this preliminary motion, the previous question was put and carried by a majority of 270 to 78.

The solemn and eloquent denunciations contained in this incomparable oration, like the prophecies of Cassandra, were neglected and fulfilled. By the rejection of this measure, the door of conciliation was shut, and preventive measures

were abandoned. About the same time, Dr. Franklin made a last attempt to effect the amicable adjustment of the dispute, by a series of communications with ministers. These all proved abortive. The cabinet obstinately refused to restore the ancient constitution to Massachusetts. The conference was thus closed, and Dr. Franklin returned to his own country, to mitigate and guide to a successful issue the war which he had in vain endeavoured to avert.

This obstinate refusal on the part of government to make the slightest concession, seemed to determine the colonists to abandon all attempts at conciliation. In Boston, those who were appointed by government, in accordance with the recent change of system, to direct the affairs of the province in co-operation with Governor Gage, were denounced as enemies to their country. The new judges were everywhere prevented from proceeding in the administration of justice. As soon as the court houses were opened, they were completely filled by a multitude, who refused admittance to the newly appointed functionaries. Every day furnished new ground of dissatisfaction, and brought the dispute nearer to that crisis at which force alone could adjust it.

* The time now approached for the general muster of the militia, and the governor either feeling, or affecting to feel apprehension from their violence, seized upon the ammunition and stores which were lodged in the provincial arsenal at Cambridge, and had them transported to Boston.

* Judge Marshall's Life of Washington.

He also seized on the powder magazines at Charlestown and some other places, which were partly private, and partly provincial property.

The indignation excited by these steps may be readily imagined. The people assembled in great numbers, and were with difficulty restrained from compelling the restoration of the stores. Not long afterwards the fort at Portsmouth in New Hampshire was attacked by an armed body of provincials and carried by storm, and the powder it contained conveyed in boats to a place of safety. A similar measure was adopted in Rhode Island. These acts of violence were partly occasioned by the example set by General Gage, and partly by the royal proclamation which had prohibited the exportation of arms and ammunition to the colonies.

At length on the 19th of April, 1775, General Gage determined upon seizing on the military stores and provisions collected by the insurgents at Concord, and on the preceding night detached from his garrison eight hundred selected men, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Smith. These troops made a rapid march to the place of their destination, in hopes of taking the malcontents by surprise; but notwithstanding their precautions, the alarm was given throughout the country, and the inhabitants flew to arms. Between four and five o'clock in the morning of the 19th, the advanced guard of the royal troops arrived at Lexington, where they found about seventy of the American militia under arms, whom Major Pitcairn ordered to disperse; and on their hesitating to obey his commands, that officer discharged his

pistol, and ordered his soldiers to fire. By the volley which ensued three or four of the militia were killed, and the rest put to flight. Lieutenant-Colonel Smith then proceeded to Concord, where he destroyed the stores of the insurgents, and then commenced his retreat towards Boston. He was not, however, permitted to make this retrograde movement without molestation. Before he left Concord he was attacked by the American militia and minute-men, who, accumulating by degrees, harassed his rear and flanks, taking advantage of every inequality of ground, and especially availing themselves of the stone walls which skirted the road, and which served them as entrenchments. Had not the detachment been met at Lexington by a body of nine hundred men, which General Gage had sent out to its support, under the command of Lord Percy, it would certainly have been cut off. The united British forces arrived, wearied and exhausted, at Bunker's Hill, near Boston, a little after sunset, having sustained a loss of sixty-five killed, one hundred and eighty wounded, and twenty-eight prisoners.

In reference to these events the sentiments of Washington were solemnly delivered in the following letter :—

TO GEORGE WILLIAM FAIRFAX, ENGLAND.

“ Philadelphia, 31 May, 1775.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ BEFORE this letter will come to hand, you must undoubtedly have received an account of the engagement in the Massachusetts Bay, between

the ministerial troops (for we do not, nor can we yet prevail upon ourselves to call them the King's troops), and the provincials of that government. But as you may not have heard how that affair began, I enclose you the several affidavits, which were taken after the action.

“ General Gage acknowledges, that the detachment under Lieutenant-Colonel Smith was sent out to destroy private property ; or, in other words, to destroy a magazine, which self-preservation obliged the inhabitants to establish. And he also confesses, in effect at least, that his men made a very precipitate retreat from Concord, notwithstanding the reinforcement under Lord Percy ; the last of which may serve to convince Lord Sandwich, and others of the same sentiment, that the Americans will fight for their liberties and property, however pusillanimous in his Lordship's eye they may appear in other respects.

“ From the best accounts I have been able to collect of that affair, indeed from every one, I believe the fact, stripped of all colouring, to be plainly this, that, if the retreat had not been as precipitate as it was, and God knows it could not well have been more so, the ministerial troops must have surrendered, or been totally cut off. For they had not arrived in Charlestown (under cover of their ships) half an hour, before a powerful body of men from Marblehead and Salem was at their heels, and must, if they had happened to be up one hour sooner, inevitably have intercepted their retreat to Charlestown. Unhappy it is, though, to reflect, that a brother's sword has been sheathed in a brother's breast, and that the once

happy and peaceful plains of America are either to be drenched with blood, or inhabited by slaves. Sad alternative ! But can a virtuous man hesitate in his choice ?

“ I am with sincere regard, and affectionate compliments to Mrs. Fairfax, dear Sir,

“ Yours, &c.,

“ GEORGE WASHINGTON.”

CHAPTER XIII.

Increase of the American Army—Address to the Canadians—
The Americans fortify Breed's Hill—Attack of the British
Troops—Burning of Charlestown—Battle of Bunker's Hill
—Address to the Crown and People of Great Britain—Washington appointed Commander-in-Chief of the American Forces—His reputation in Congress.

THIS insignificant skirmish commenced the memorable American war. Inevitable as the appeal to arms had been seen to be, each party, as if foreboding the momentous events which were to transpire, and the serious responsibilities they would impose, endeavoured to throw upon the other the charge of the accidental aggression; and the provincial congress, desirous of showing the necessity under which the militia had acted, forwarded the depositions which had been taken after the action, with a letter to the inhabitants of Great Britain, complaining that hostilities had been aggressively commenced against them.

Immediately a large accession of troops assembled from Massachusetts and the neighbouring provinces, completing an army of thirty thousand men, while numerous additional forces joined themselves, who were obliged to return for want of means of subsisting them in the field. A similar enthusiasm extended itself to the other provinces, and was quickly discovered in an expedition which

reflects great credit upon their promptitude and military conduct. The possession of the forts of Ticonderoga and Crown Point, commanding the lakes George and Champlain, was an object of the last importance, and some gentlemen of Connecticut formed the bold design of surprising them. About forty volunteers set out for this purpose. By a singular coincidence Colonel Arnold met them at Castleton, their rendezvous, with a body of men whom he was leading to effect the same object. Both forts were surprised and taken without opposition; and one hundred pieces of cannon and a large quantity of ammunition fell into the hands of the provincials.

Meanwhile the royal forces found themselves in a state of blockade by the troops who had assembled in such numbers around Boston. At length the General was reinforced by a large accession from Great Britain, accompanied by Generals Howe, Burgoyne, and Clinton. Previously to commencing active operations Gage published a proclamation offering pardon to all who would lay down their arms, except Samuel Adams and John Hancock, "whose offences," he declared, "were too flagitious to admit of any other consideration than that of condign punishment." This proclamation was everywhere regarded as futile and insulting. The second General Congress had assembled on the very day on which the fort of Ticonderoga had been summoned, and had the satisfaction of finding delegates from Georgia among their number, so that the union of the thirteen provinces was now complete. Under their directions plans for further operations were deliberately concerted.

One of their first acts was to resolve, that as Congress had nothing more in view than the defence of the colonies, no expedition ought to be made by any colony against Canada. In conjunction with this they resolved to address a letter to the inhabitants of Canada, the composition of which was committed to Messrs. Jay, Adams, and Deane; and which is distinguished by so much manliness of sentiment and force of expression, that it deserves some particular notice in this place.

“ Since the conclusion of the late war,” they say, “ we have been happy in considering you as fellow-subjects; and from the commencement of the present plan for subjugating the continent we have viewed you as fellow-sufferers with us. As we are both entitled, by the bounty of an indulgent Creator, to freedom, and being both devoted by the cruel edicts of a despotic administration to common ruin, we perceived the fate of the Protestant and Catholic colonies to be strongly linked together, and therefore invited you to join with us in resolving to be free, and in rejecting with disdain the fetters of slavery, however artfully polished.

“ We most sincerely condole with you on the arrival of that day in the course of which the sun shall not shine on a single freeman in all your extensive dominions. Be assured that your unmerited degradation has engaged the most unfeigned pity of your sister colonies, and we flatter ourselves you will not, by tamely bearing the yoke, suffer that pity to be supplanted by contempt.

“ When hardy attempts are made to deprive men of rights bestowed by the Almighty; when avenues are cut through the most solemn compacts

for the admission of despotism ; when the plighted faith of government ceases to give security to dutiful subjects ; and when the insidious stratagems and manœuvres of peace become more terrible than the sanguinary operations of war ; it is high time for them to assert those rights, and with honest indignation oppose the torrent of oppression rushing in upon them."

After assuring them that the capture of the forts of Ticonderoga and Crown Point would not be followed by any encroachments towards Canada, and that the measure was only dictated by self-preservation, they strongly represented the subservient condition to which they would be reduced by closing with the claims of Great Britain, and concluded with the following animated expressions :—

" We yet entertain hopes of your uniting with us in the defence of our common liberty ; and there is yet reason to believe that should we join in imploring the attention of our sovereign to the unmerited and unparalleled oppressions of his American subjects, he will at length be undeceived, and forbid a licentious ministry any longer to riot in the ruin of the rights of mankind."

On Charlestown Neck, a peninsula situated to the north of Boston, with which it communicates by a bridge, is a considerable eminence called Bunker's Hill. As this was deemed a post of great importance the Americans resolved to occupy it. By some misapprehension of orders, Breed's Hill, which was nearer to Boston, was fixed upon for the entrenchments instead of Bunker's Hill ; and here, in one night, a redoubt was thrown up.

Early in the morning the attention of the British was directed to this unexpected spectacle by the guns of the Lively man-of-war; and from the lofty buildings of Boston their preparations were seen to be so extensive as to render it necessary immediately to dislodge them. Moreover, they were hourly increasing the strength of their position in spite of showers of shot and shells from the vessels in the harbour.

It was at noon on the 16th of June, 1775, that General Howe, with three thousand selected troops, embarked in boats for Moreton's Point, at the southern extremity of Charlestown Neck, for the purpose of attacking these entrenchments. The most intense interest was now prevailing in Boston. Every elevated position was occupied by a throng of eager spectators, whose hearts were agitated by conflicting emotions of horror, anxiety and hope. While every eye was strained upon the British lines as they moved along with almost mechanical regularity, under cover of their artillery, which played incessantly upon the works, a new object suddenly diverted their attention. During the advance of the troops orders were given to set fire to Charlestown, a handsome village containing about five hundred houses, chiefly of wood, which flanked the line of march. The sullen ascent of dense volumes of smoke announced to the citizens of Boston the prompt execution of this unexpected order. In a very short time it gave place to the fury of the flames, and the whole village exhibited one vast and imposing conflagration.

The enemy * were permitted to approach unmo-

* Judge Marshall's Life of Washington.

lested to the distance of one hundred yards from the American works, when a sudden fire of small arms was simultaneously poured upon them with such deadly certainty of aim that their line was broken, and they fell back precipitately towards the landing place. By the very great exertions of their officers they were rallied and brought up to the charge; but were again driven back in confusion by the heavy and incessant fire from the works. General Howe is said to have been left at one time almost alone, and it is certain that very few officers about his person escaped unhurt.

The impression to be made by victory or defeat in this early stage of the war, was deemed of the utmost consequence, and therefore very extraordinary exertions were made once more to rally the English. With great difficulty they were a third time led up to the works. The redoubt was now attacked on three sides at once, while some pieces of artillery which had been brought to bear on the breast-work, raked it from end to end. The cross fire, too, from the ships and floating batteries, not only annoyed the works on Breed's Hill, but deterred any considerable reinforcements from passing into the peninsula and coming to their assistance. The ammunition of the Americans was now so nearly exhausted that they were no longer able to keep up the same incessant stream of fire which had twice repulsed the enemy, and on his third attempt, the redoubt, the walls of which the English mounted with ease, was carried at the point of the bayonet. Yet the Americans, many of whom were without bayonets, are said to have maintained the contest with clubbed muskets till the redoubt was half filled with the king's troops.

The redoubt being lost, the breast-work, which had been defended with equal courage and obstinacy, was necessarily abandoned, and the very hazardous operation undertaken of retreating, in the face of a victorious enemy, over Charlestown Neck; where they were exposed to the same cross fire from the Glasgow man-of-war, and two floating batteries, which had deterred the reinforcements ordered to their aid from coming to their assistance, and had probably prevented their receiving proper supplies of ammunition.

In this enterprise about three thousand men, composing the flower of the British army, were engaged, and high encomiums were bestowed on the resolution they manifested. Their killed and wounded amounted, according to the returns of General Gage, to one thousand and fifty-four, an immense proportion of the number engaged in the action. Notwithstanding the danger of their retreat over Charlestown Neck, the loss of the Americans was stated at only four hundred and fifty men, including the killed, wounded, and missing; among the former was Dr. Warren, a gentleman greatly beloved and regretted, who fell just after the provincials began their retreat from the breast-work.

The colonial force engaged in this action was stated through the country at fifteen hundred; by some it has been supposed to have amounted to four thousand.

Although the ground was lost the Americans claimed the victory. Their confidence in themselves was greatly increased, and it was universally asked, How many more such triumphs the British army could afford?

But great as was their military zeal and energy at this crisis, they suffered no diminution of loyal attachment and allegiance to the crown and people of England. A petition was voted by Congress to his Majesty, full of the strongest expressions of duty and attachment, and with it a letter was addressed to the British nation; to which, for its magnanimity and eloquence, perhaps the whole compass of history does not offer a parallel.

Its title is no less remarkable than its matter:—

THE TWELVE UNITED COLONIES, BY THEIR
DELEGATES IN CONGRESS, TO THE INHABIT-
ANTS OF GREAT BRITAIN.

“Friends, Countrymen, and Brethren.

“By these, and by every other appellation that may designate the ties which bind us to each other, we entreat your serious attention to this our second attempt to prevent their dissolution. Remembrance of former friendships, pride in the glorious achievements of our common ancestors, and affection for the heirs of their virtue, have hitherto preserved our mutual connection. But when that friendship is violated by the grossest injuries, when the pride of ancestry becomes our reproach, and we are no otherwise allied than as tyrants and slaves, when reduced to the melancholy alternative of renouncing your favour or our freedom, can we hesitate about the choice? Let the spirit of Britons determine.”

They then proceed to enumerate the obnoxious acts of the British government. The imposition of direct taxes—the closing of the port of Boston, and the wanton burning of Charlestown. After

appealing to those feelings which peculiarly distinguish British subjects, and solemnly denying the accusation brought against them that they refused to submit to commercial regulations, they proceed to notice the recent advances of ministers towards conciliation.—“A plan of accommodation,” they say, “(as it has been absurdly called) has been proposed by your ministers to our respective assemblies. Were this proposal free from every other objection but that which arises from the time of the offer, it would not be unexceptionable. Can men deliberate with the bayonet at their breasts? can they treat with freedom while their towns are sacked? when daily instances of injustice and oppression disturb the slower operations of reason?”

After some further explanations of their designs, they proceed to argue upon either result of the present conflict.

“Should victory declare in your favour, yet men trained up to arms from their infancy, and animated by the love of liberty, will not afford a cheap or easy conquest; of this at least we are assured, that our struggle will be glorious, our success certain, since even in death we shall find that freedom which in life you forbid us to enjoy.

“On the other hand, should you prove unsuccessful, should that connection, which we most ardently wish to maintain, be dissolved,—should your ministers exhaust your treasures, and waste the blood of your countrymen in vain attempts on our liberty, do they not deliver you weak and defenceless to your natural enemies. Since then your liberty must be the price of your victories,

your ruin of your defeat, what blind fatality can urge you to a pursuit destructive of all that Britons hold dear?

“If you have no regard to the connection which has for ages subsisted between us, if you have forgot the wounds we received fighting by your side for the extension of the empire, if our commerce is an object below your consideration, if justice and humanity have lost their influence on your hearts, still motives are not wanting to excite your indignation at the measures now pursued,—your wealth, your honour, your liberty are at stake.

“Notwithstanding the distress to which we are reduced, we sometimes forget our own afflictions to anticipate and sympathise in yours. We grieve that rash and inconsiderate councils should precipitate the destruction of an empire, which has been the envy and admiration of ages; and call God to witness that we would part with our property, endanger our lives, and sacrifice every thing but liberty, to redeem you from ruin.

“A cloud hangs over your heads and ours. Ere this reaches you, it may probably have burst upon us: let us then (before the remembrance of former kindness is obliterated) once more repeat those appellations which are ever grateful in our ears; let us intreat Heaven to avert our ruin and the destruction that threatens our friends, brethren, and countrymen on the other side of the Atlantic.

“By order of the Congress.

“JOHN HANCOCK, President.”

“Philadelphia, July 3, 1775.”

The British general now considered it inexpedient to undertake further offensive operations, and satisfied himself with fortifying Bunker's Hill, which secured to him the peninsula of Charlestown, in which, and in that of Boston, he still remained closely blockaded.

Meanwhile, the congress was led to that auspicious step which ensured the ultimate, though distant and hard-earned triumph of the American cause. From the first organisation of the congress, Colonel Washington had been one of its most active members, and from the commencement of actual hostilities, he had been placed upon every committee which devised the measures of defence. It had now become necessary to appoint a Commander-in-chief, and the eyes of all simultaneously turned to Washington, and "in special confidence of his patriotism, valour, conduct, and fidelity, he was unanimously elected 'General and Commander-in-chief of the United Colonies, and of all forces now raised, or to be raised by them.'" The day following, the announcement was made to him by the President, and he replied in a few words, which are amusingly characteristic.

"Although," said he, "I am truly sensible of the high honour done me in this appointment, yet I feel great distress from a consciousness that my abilities and military experience may not be equal to the extensive trust. However, as the congress desire it, I will enter upon the momentous duty, and exert every power I possess in their service, and for the support of the glorious cause. I beg they will accept my most cordial thanks for this distinguished testimony of their approbation.

“But lest some unlucky event should happen unfavourable to my reputation, I beg it may be remembered by every gentleman in this room, that I this day declare with the utmost sincerity, that I do not think myself equal to the command I am honoured with. I beg leave, Sir, to assure the congress, that as no pecuniary consideration could have tempted me to accept this arduous employment, at the expense of my domestic care and happiness, I do not wish to make any profit from it. I will keep an exact account of my expenses. These I doubt not they will discharge, and this is all I desire.”

On his acceptance of this appointment, an address was presented to him from the provincial congress of New York, in which, after expressing their joy at the measure, they proceed to say, “We have the fullest assurance, that whenever this important contest shall be decided by that fondest wish of every American soul, an accommodation with our mother country, you will cheerfully resign the important deposit committed into your hands, and reassume the character of our worthiest citizen.”

The loss of Washington to the deliberations of the congress was irreparable; and to it, perhaps, some of the neglects and indiscretions by which that body embarrassed their general, and retarded the successful issue of the war, may fairly be attributed. His attention to business was very remarkable. He made himself thoroughly master of every question on which he legislated in all its bearings and details, and this he generally accomplished by writing fully and carefully all that he

could ascertain respecting it. Among his posthumous papers there is still to be seen a copy of the petition to the King, to which reference has been made, written by him at length in a fair and handsome hand. Another habit similar to this, was that of condensing documents by writing their substance in a distinct and careful manner.

The opinion entertained of him by his associates in the first congress, may be learned from an anecdote related by Mr. Wirt in his biography of Patrick Henry, one of the most distinguished members of that body :—

“Congress rose,” he writes, “in October, and Mr. Henry returned to his native county. Here, as was natural, he was surrounded by his neighbours, who were eager to learn not only what had been done, but what kind of men had composed that illustrious body. He answered their inquiries with all his wonted kindness and candour, and having been asked by one of them whom he thought the greatest man in congress, he replied ‘If you speak of eloquence, Mr. Rutledge of South Carolina is by far the greatest orator ; but if you speak of solid information and sound judgment, Colonel Washington is unquestionably the greatest man on that floor.’”

CHAPTER XIV.

Reception of Washington as Commander-in-Chief—Difficulties of his Station—Mismanagement of Congress—Temporary Enlistments of Soldiers—Remonstrances of Washington—Aggressive Operations of the American Army—Evacuation of Boston by the British—Washington removes the Army to New York—Preparations for the succeeding Campaign—Declaration of Independence.

GENERAL WASHINGTON was now to enter upon one of the most arduous courses of service which can well be imagined. The non-importation agreements had been observed with such fidelity that there existed throughout the united provinces but a scanty supply of those species of merchandise for which they were dependent on Great Britain, and which were of the first importance in the camp. The deliberations of the congress were in no small degree embarrassed by the interference of provincial assemblies; the nation was far from opulent, and even the congress were instinctively jealous of the growing power and influence of a single individual, though that individual was Washington, and at one time perplexed him by their unnecessary interference, and at another by their total neglect or tardy attention to his recommendations.

The appointment of General Washington gave universal satisfaction. On his journey to headquarters, which he took with his usual promptitude,

he met with the most flattering attentions ; he was continually escorted by companies of volunteers ; and at Springfield, a hundred miles from Boston, a committee of the Massachusetts assembly met and accompanied him to Cambridge. On his arrival an address was presented to him by that body, pledging themselves to the most cordial co-operation with his measures. His reply was simple and dignified :—

“ Gentlemen,” said he, “ your kind congratulations on my appointment and arrival demand my warmest acknowledgments, and will ever be held in grateful remembrance. In exchanging the enjoyments of domestic life for the duties of my present honourable but arduous situation, I only emulate the virtue and public spirit of the whole province of Massachusetts, which, with a firmness and patriotism without an example, has sacrificed all the comforts of social and political life in support of the rights of mankind and the welfare of our common country. My highest ambition is to be the happy instrument of vindicating these rights, and to see this devoted province again restored to peace, liberty, and safety.”

On arriving at the head-quarters at Cambridge he was received by the troops with joyful acclamations. He found the army to consist of fourteen thousand five hundred men, and so disposed as to beleaguer the enemy within Boston. He posted one division of them at Roxburg, to form the right wing of the army ; and appointed General Ward to the command of it. The left wing he placed on two hills, called Prospect and Winter Hills, and was commanded by General Lee ; the centre was

posted at Cambridge, and was commanded by General Washington in person.

On inspecting the condition of the troops the General found much that impressed him with deep concern. Many of the soldiers were ill-provided with arms, particularly with bayonets; and he shortly became acquainted with the alarming fact, that the quantity of powder in the camp would only supply nine rounds to each man. The army were also much distressed by the want of tents and clothing. The urgency and continuance of these wants were increased by causes which General Washington thus stated in a letter to Congress:—

“ I should be extremely deficient in gratitude as well as justice if I did not take the first opportunity to acknowledge the readiness and attention which the congress and different committees have shown to make every thing as convenient and agreeable as possible; but there is a vital and inherent principle of delay incompatible with military service in transacting business through such various and different channels. I esteem it my duty, therefore, to represent the inconvenience that must unavoidably ensue from a dependence on a number of persons for supplies, and submit it to the consideration of congress whether the public service will not be best promoted by appointing a commissary-general for that purpose.”

The fact that no such officer had been appointed, and that the army wanted a pay-master and quarter-master-general, will give some idea of the labours and difficulties to which the general was subjected. The want of arms and ammunition was one which it was extremely difficult to supply. A

successful voyage was, however, made to the coast of Africa, where every pound of gunpowder for sale in the British factories was purchased, and a magazine was seized in the island of Bermudas.

The importance of a maritime force now began to be extensively felt throughout the country, and this sentiment was daily increased by the aggressions of British ships of war, whose commanders had received orders from his Majesty to proceed against any seaport towns where troops might be raised, or military works erected. Under these directions, a small naval force arrived before Falmouth in Massachusetts, commanded by Captain Mowat, who on his arrival gave notice that he was directed to burn every seaport town between Boston and Halifax, and demanded of the inhabitants all their arms and ammunition, and four of their citizens as hostages. This order being of course refused, a furious cannonade and bombardment was commenced, by which the whole town was speedily reduced to ashes. This brutal measure may be said to have originated the American navy. Ships of war were immediately fitted out, and at the urgent suggestion of General Washington, courts were established to take cognisance of prizes, whose jurisdiction was conducted on the soundest principles of international law.

In September, 1775, a committee of congress was appointed, who repaired to head quarters for the purpose of consulting with the commander-in-chief "on the most effectual method of continuing, supporting, and regulating a continental army." On their return, it was determined by congress that the new army intended to lie before Boston should consist of twenty thousand three hundred

and seventy-two men, whose officers were to be raised chiefly from the troops already stationed there. There was one result of the report of this committee and the deliberations of the congress upon it, which for years entailed the most pernicious and embarrassing effects, and which was nearly fatal to the cause of American independence.

The members of this body had suddenly sprung into political importance. Their practical knowledge of the means of conducting a war was in general as scanty as their notions of political justice, and their spirit of freedom and patriotism, were exemplary. Their caution, as was natural, increased with the peril of their cause, until in this particular instance, it realised the proverbial effect of fear, by creating a danger almost as serious as any which it strove to avoid. The example of a Cromwell afforded by the annals of their ancestors, and of a host of military despots supplied by universal history, inspired in their minds a fear lest, having thrown off the restraints of the parent government, their liberties should fall a prey to the ambition of a military faction, whose power would unquestionably exceed that of any other portion of the community. After the ample opportunities they had had of acquainting themselves with the character of Washington, it is next to impossible that these fears should have had reference to him; certain it is, however, that they extensively prevailed, and dictated the measure which perpetually thinned the numbers and relaxed the discipline of their army. This great error consisted in enlisting soldiers not for the duration of the war, but for the term of one year only. Its lamentable consequences will be seen hereafter.

As soon as the measure was determined on, the general issued his orders that all officers who intended to decline the further service of their country at the expiration of the term for which they were engaged, should signify their intentions in writing to their respective colonels, and "those brave men and true patriots who resolved to continue to serve and defend their brethren, privileges, and property," were also requested to signify their intentions in the same manner.

But the comparative inactivity of the army as it lay before Boston, engaged in strengthening its position, with now and then an inconsiderable skirmish, allowed time for that ardour to cool, which had been so gloriously evinced at Lexington and Breed's Hill. Many were unwilling to continue in the service after the brief term of their first enlistment. Some consented under inadmissible conditions, while some suspended their decision.

The general, therefore, repeated his orders for an explicit and unconditional declaration. "The times," said he, "and the importance of the great cause we are engaged in, allow no time for hesitation and delay. When life, liberty, and property are at stake, when our country is in danger of being a melancholy scene of bloodshed and desolation; when our towns are laid in ashes, and innocent women and children driven from their peaceful habitations, exposed to the rigour of an inclement season, to depend perhaps on the hand of charity for support; when calamities like these are staring us in the face, and a brutal, savage enemy (more so than ever was found in a civilised nation) are

threatening us, and every thing we hold dear with destruction from foreign troops, it little becomes the character of a soldier to shrink from danger, and condition for new terms. It is the general's intentions to indulge both officers and soldiers who compose the new army, with furloughs for a reasonable time, but this must be done in such a manner as not to injure the service, or weaken the army too much at once." In this state of things, several officers, supposing that commissions and rank might depend on recruiting men, began without permission to enlist soldiers to serve particularly under them. This practice it was necessary to stop. All further enlistments under particular officers were forbidden till directions to that effect should be given. "Commissions in the army," say the orders, "are not intended for those who can raise the most men, but for such gentlemen as are most likely to deserve them. The general would not have it even supposed, nor our enemies encouraged to believe, that there is a man in his army (except a few under particular circumstances) who will require to be twice asked to do what his honour, his personal liberty, the welfare of his country, and the safety of his family so loudly demand of him. Where motives powerful as these conspire to call men into service, and when that service is rewarded with higher pay than private soldiers ever yet received in any former war, the general cannot, nor will not, until convinced to the contrary, harbour so despicable an opinion of their understanding and their zeal for the cause as to believe they will desert it."

At the same time that General Washington

urged these appeals upon the troops, he communicated his sentiments with equal earnestness to congress.

“The disadvantages,” he observed, “attending the limited enlistment of troops are too apparent to those who are eye-witnesses of them to render any animadversion necessary; but to gentlemen at a distance, whose attention is engrossed by a thousand important objects, the case may be otherwise. That we were not obliged at one time to dispute these lines under disadvantageous circumstances (proceeding from the same causes, to wit, the troops disbanding of themselves before the militia could be got in) is to me a matter of wonder and astonishment, and proves that General Howe was either unacquainted with our situation, or restrained by his instructions from putting anything to hazard till his reinforcements should arrive. Since the first of December, I have been devising every means in my power to secure these encampments; and though I am sensible that we never have since that period been able to act on the offensive, and at times not in a condition to defend; yet, the cost of marching home one set of men, and bringing in another, the havoc and waste occasioned by the first, the repairs necessary for the second, with a thousand incidental charges and inconveniences which have arisen, and which it is scarcely possible either to recollect or describe, amount to nearly as much as the keeping up of a respectable body of troops the whole time, ready for any emergency would have done.

“To this may be added, that you can never have a well disciplined army.

“To make men well acquainted with the duties

of a soldier, requires time. To bring them under proper discipline and subordination, not only requires time, but is a work of great difficulty, and in this army, where there is so little distinction between officers and soldiers, requires an uncommon degree of attention. To expect then the same service from new and undisciplined recruits as from veteran soldiers, is to expect what never did, and perhaps never will happen.

“Men who are familiarised to danger, approach it without shrinking, whereas troops unused to service apprehend danger where no danger exists.

“Three things prompt men to a regular discharge of their duty in time of action, natural bravery, hope of reward, and fear of punishment. The two first are common to the untutored and disciplined soldier, but the last most obviously distinguishes one from the other. A coward taught to believe, that if he break his rank, and abandon his colours, he will be punished with death by his own party, will take his chance against the enemy; but the man who thinks little of the one, and is fearful of the other, acts from present feelings, regardless of consequences. Again, men of a day's standing will not look forward, and from experience we find that as the time approaches for their discharge, they grow careless of their arms, ammunition, camp utensils, &c; nay, even the barracks themselves have felt uncommon marks of wanton depredation, and we are laid under fresh trouble and additional expense in providing for every fresh party, at a time when we find it next to impossible to procure the articles absolutely necessary in the first instance. To this may be added the seasoning the new recruits must have to a camp, and the loss

consequent thereon. But this is not all: men engaged for a short limited time only, have the officers too much in their power; to obtain a degree of popularity, in order to induce a second enlistment, a kind of familiarity takes place, which brings on a relaxation of discipline, unlicensed furloughs, and other indulgences incompatible with order and good government, by which means the latter part of the time for which the soldier was engaged, is spent in undoing what it required much labour to inculcate in the first.

“To go into an enumeration of all the evils we have experienced in this late great change of the army, and the expenses incidental to it, to say nothing of the hazard we have run, and must run, between the discharging of one army, and the enlistment of another (unless an enormous expense of militia is incurred), would greatly exceed the bounds of a letter. What I have already taken the liberty of saying, will serve to convey a general idea of the matter, and therefore I shall with all due deference, take the freedom to give it as my opinion that if congress have any reason to believe there will be occasion for troops another year, and consequently for another enlistment, they would save money and have infinitely better troops, if they were, even at the bounty of twenty, thirty, or more dollars, to engage the men already enlisted till January next, and such others as may be wanted to complete the establishment for and during the war. I will not undertake to say that the men may be had on these terms, but I am satisfied it will never do to let the matter alone, as it was last year, till the time of service is near expiring. In the first place, the hazard is too great, in the

next, the trouble and perplexity of disbanding one army and raising another at the same instant, and in such a critical situation as the last was, is scarcely in the power of words to describe, and such as no man who has once experienced it, will ever undergo again."

The semblance of inactivity which General Washington was compelled to preserve while blockading Boston, was matter of sensible annoyance to him, anxious as he was, by some great exploit, to show himself worthy of the honourable post to which he had been advanced. As the winter approached the army suffered extremely for want of fuel, clothes and provisions. The period of enlistment was drawing to a close, and recruits came in but slowly to occupy the places of those who insisted upon returning home. Some discontent prevailed at what was considered the sluggishness and undue caution of the commander-in-chief, in permitting the enemy to remain so long unmolested. Under these painful circumstances the general wrote to the congress in terms which will convey some idea of their incapacity to conduct the affairs of a war:—

"It gives me great distress," he writes, Sept. 21, 1775, "to be obliged to solicit the attention of the honourable congress to the state of their army, in terms which imply the slightest apprehension of being neglected. But my situation is inexpressibly distressing, to see the winter fast approaching upon a naked army, the time of their service within a few weeks of expiring, and no provision yet made for such important events. Added to these, the military chest is totally exhausted, the pay-master has not a single dollar in hand: the commissary-

general assures me that he has strained his credit for the subsistence of the army to the utmost. The quarter-master-general is precisely in the same situation, and the greater part of the troops are in a state not far from mutiny upon the deduction from their stated allowance."

A committee was accordingly appointed to repair to head-quarters to provide for the enlistment of the army for the year 1776. They found at the expiration of the year the names of only nine thousand six hundred and fifty soldiers on the general's muster-roll. By their exertions the numbers were increased by accessions from the militia to seventeen thousand. Under these circumstances the commander-in-chief wrote as follows to the congress:—

"It is not in the pages of history, perhaps, to furnish a case like ours—to maintain a post within musket-shot of the enemy for six months together without ammunition; and at the same time to disband one army and recruit another within that distance of twenty odd British regiments, is more, probably, than was ever attempted. But if we succeed as well in the last as we have heretofore in the first, I shall think it the most fortunate event of my whole life."

The remarks of General Washington need occasion no surprise. His communications, which were remarkably exact, were addressed to a large body of men. Had there been one of them either treacherous or indiscreet, the condition of his troops would have become known to the British general, and utter defeat would have been the inevitable consequence.

At length Washington determined to attack the British lines. He was however persuaded by his council of war, in preference to this measure to

take possession of Dorchester heights, an eminence which commands the harbour of Boston. Having therefore, by a skilful manœuvre diverted the attention of the British garrison, he, on the 4th of March, 1776, pushed forward a working party of twelve hundred men, under the protection of eight hundred troops. By extraordinary exertion, and the dexterous use of the spade and pick-axe, they by day break had completed respectable lines of defence. The British admiral no sooner perceived these preparations than he notified to General Howe, who on Gage's departure had succeeded to the command, that he could no longer continue with safety in the harbour unless the Americans were dislodged from their new position. Two days afterwards General Howe had completed his arrangements for an attack upon the Americans. He embarked his troops for the purpose of approaching the heights by water; the transports however were dispersed by a storm, and the delay thus occasioned was so vigorously employed by the Americans in strengthening their position, that when the storm subsided the general deemed it unsafe to attack it. Finding the town no longer tenable, the general resolved to evacuate it; this intention he executed on the 17th of March, and sailed with his whole garrison for Halifax, in Nova Scotia. Fortunate as this step was deemed by the Americans, it defeated one of General Washington's most sanguine schemes. He had determined, while the flower of the British army was engaged in attacking the heights of Dorchester, to descend upon the town of Boston with four thousand chosen troops, and the plan was so arranged as almost to ensure success.

The recovery of so important a town as Boston was universally hailed as a most joyful event. Valuable stores had been left by the British army, and the citizens, who had undergone such unexampled sufferings, once more found themselves safe in the protection of their country. The thanks of the congress were unanimously voted to General Washington; a gold medal was struck in commemoration of the event, and the citizens received their deliverer with all the expressions of unbounded gratitude. In his letter to congress, informing them that he had executed their order, and communicated to the army their vote of thanks, he observes — “ They were indeed, at first, a band of undisciplined husbandmen, but it is, under God, to their bravery and attention to their duty that I am indebted for that success which has procured me the only reward I wish to receive, the affection and esteem of my countrymen.”

While these events were transpiring the congress had determined on the invasion of Canada, in the hope that its inhabitants would co-operate to rid themselves of the protection of Great Britain. For this purpose they gave the command of one thousand men to Generals Schuyler and Montgomery, with orders to march into Canada; the former of these generals, however, was soon obliged to return in consequence of ill health, and the latter fell in battle before Quebec, leaving behind him the highest character as a man and as a soldier. The expedition proved entirely abortive. The decision, however, of the committee appointed to inquire into the cause of the miscarriage ought to have conveyed important instructions to the congress. They reported “ that the short enlist-

ments of the continental troops in Canada have been one great cause of the miscarriages there, by rendering unstable the number of men engaged in military enterprises, by making them disorderly and disobedient to their officers, and by precipitating the commanding officers into measures which their prudence might have postponed could they have relied on a longer continuance of their troops in service."

It now became evident that the Hudson would be the scene of the next campaign, and General Washington marched the main body of his army to New York, where he arrived on the 14th of April, 1776. Admirably as this place was calculated for defence by a naval force, it lay open to a serious objection in the present circumstances of the Americans from that very accessibility from the ocean which constitutes the advantage of its position. Forts were therefore immediately erected which might command the approaches, and hulks were sunk in the north and east rivers to obstruct the passage.

The passes in the high lands bordering on the Hudson also became an object of great importance to both armies, as the command of that river would facilitate or prevent the transmission of supplies to the northern army, and secure that intercourse between the northern and southern colonies which was of the utmost consequence to the Americans. It was the careful possession of these important points, and the sagacity which estimated their relative importance, which constituted one of the chief merits of Washington as a commander. In this instance his care to fortify these passes was incessant. The American army was employed in these

preparations until General Lord Howe appeared with the British forces at Sandy Hook.

Hitherto the war had been carried on by the colonists solely for the redress of grievances and to obtain the repeal of certain obnoxious acts. The King was still acknowledged as sovereign, and prayed for as usual in public worship ; and as lately as June, 1775, a fast was proclaimed by congress, one motive of which was to beseech the Almighty "to bless our rightful sovereign King George the Third, and to inspire him with wisdom." A very different sentiment had now begun to actuate the entire community. The relation of the colonies with the parent state had become matter of general and thorough discussion, and the theoretic views which were engendered by the popular agitation of such a subject were deepened by the every-day occurrences of the war. Numerous publications of great talent and universal circulation contributed to mature the political views of the nation at large till they harmonised with those of the few independent minds which had commanded a more extended political horizon than the rest of their countrymen, and anticipated the now general impression that America ought to declare herself a free and independent state, and sever for ever her unprofitable connection with Great Britain. The congress, constituted upon the most comprehensive principles of representation, may be considered as the index of the movements of the American mind ; and from them originated the ever memorable measure, which in one hour "called a new world into existence," by erecting the colony of a distant isle of the ocean into an independent state. On the motion of Richard Henry Lee, one of the

representatives of Virginia, they passed their celebrated declaration of independence. It was as follows :—

“ When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

“ We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal ; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness ; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed ; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organising its power in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established, should not be changed for light and transient causes ; and, accordingly, all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to

reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right — it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former system of government. The history of the present King of Great Britain, is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object, the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

“He has refused his assent to laws the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

“He has forbidden his governors to pass laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

“He has refused to pass other laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of representation in the legislature—a right inestimable to them, and formidable to tyrants only.

“He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

“He has dissolved representative houses repeatedly, for opposing, with manly firmness, his invasions on the rights of his people.

“He has refused, for a long time after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected, whereby the legislative powers, incapable of annihilation, have returned to the people at large for their

exercise; the state remaining in the mean time exposed to all the danger of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

“He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these states, for that purpose obstructing the laws for naturalisation of foreigners, refusing to pass others to encourage their migration hither, and raising the conditions of new appropriations of lands.

“He has obstructed the administration of justice, by refusing his assent to laws for establishing judiciary powers.

“He has made judges dependent on his will alone for the tenure of their offices and the amount and payment of their salaries.

“He has erected a multitude of new offices, and sent hither swarms of officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance.

“He has kept among us, in time of peace, standing armies, without the consent of our legislatures.

“He has affected to render the military independent of, and superior to, the civil power.

“He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws, giving his assent to their acts of pretended legislation;

“For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us;

“For protecting them, by a mock trial, from punishment for any murders which they should commit on the inhabitants of these states;

“For cutting off our trade with all parts of the world;

“For imposing taxes upon us without our consent;

“ For depriving us, in many cases, of the benefits of trial by jury ;

“ For transporting us beyond the seas to be tried for pretended offences ;

“ For abolishing the free system of English laws in a neighbouring province, establishing therein an arbitrary government, and enlarging its boundaries, so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these colonies ;

“ For taking away our charters, abolishing our most valuable laws, and altering fundamentally the form of our governments ;

“ For suspending our own legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

“ He has abdicated government here, by declaring us out of his protection, and waging war against us.

“ He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

“ He is, at this time, transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation, and tyranny already begun, with circumstances of cruelty and perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the head of a civilised nation.

“ He has constrained our fellow citizens, taken captive on the high seas, to bear arms against their country, to become the executioners of their friends and brethren, or to fall themselves by their hands.

“ He has excited domestic insurrections among us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabi-

tants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions.

“In every stage of these oppressions we have petitioned for redress in the most humble terms ; our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

“Nor have we been wanting in attention to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of the attempts made by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them, by the ties of our common kindred, to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our connexions and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our separation, and hold them as we hold the rest of mankind—enemies in war, in peace, friends,

“We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do in the name, and by authority of the good people of these colonies, solemnly publish and declare, that these united colonies are, and of right ought to be, FREE and INDEPENDENT STATES ; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown ; and that all political connexion between them and

the state of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved ; and that, as free and independent states, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and do all other acts and things which independent states may, of right, do. And, for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honour."

CHAPTER XV.

Opinions of General Washington respecting the Declaration of Independence—General Condition of his Army—Attempt at Compromise on the Part of Howe—Failure of the same—Addresses to the Army—Battle and serious Defeat at Brooklyn.

No more satisfactory indication can be imagined of the general preparation of the public mind for a separation from Great Britain, than was afforded in the ease by which the transition was effected from political subordination to a state of political independence. It is true that some portions of the American community were more closely knit than others, both by political affinities and commercial relations, to the mother country; but by these no considerable opposition was made, and as a national measure it was perhaps as unanimous as any recorded in history.

As General Washington was at head quarters, when this great resolution passed the Congress, his signature is not affixed to the declaration. On receiving intelligence of it, he wrote as follows to the President:—

“I perceive that Congress have been employed in deliberating on measures of the most interesting nature. It is certain that it is not with us to determine in many instances what consequences will

flow from our councils ; but yet it behoves us to adopt such, as, under the smiles of a gracious and all-kind Providence, will be most likely to promote our happiness. I trust the late decisive part they have taken is calculated for that end, and will secure us that freedom and those privileges which have been, and are refused to us contrary to the voice of nature and the British constitution.— Agreeable to the request of Congress, I caused ‘ The Declaration ’ to be proclaimed before all the army under my immediate command, and have the pleasure to inform them that the measure seemed to have their most hearty assent, the expressions and behaviour both of officers and men testifying their warmest approbation of it.”

In allusion to the general prospects of the campaign, he thus concludes his letter :—

“ The intelligence we have from a few deserters that have come over to us, and from others, is that General Howe has between nine and ten thousand men, who are chiefly landed on the island (Staten Island) posted on different parts, and securing the several communications from the Jerseys, with small works and intrenchments, to prevent our people from paying them a visit ;—that all the islanders have joined them, seem well disposed to favour their cause, and have agreed to take up arms in their behalf. They look for Admiral Howe’s arrival every day with his fleet and a large reinforcement—are in high spirits, and talk confidently of success, and of carrying all before them when he comes. I trust through divine favour, and our exertions, they will be disappointed in their views ; and, at all events, any advantage they may gain will cost them very dear. If our

troops will behave well, which I hope will be the case (having everything to contend for which freemen hold dear), they will have to wade through much blood and slaughter before they can carry any part of our works, if they carry them at all,—and at best be in possession of a melancholy and mournful victory.—May the sacredness of our cause inspire our soldiery with sentiments of heroism, and lead them to the performance of the noblest exploits! With this wish, I have the honour to be, &c. “GEORGE WASHINGTON.”

* Lord Howe, to whom the command of the fleet had been intrusted, arrived at Halifax about a fortnight after the departure of his brother the general. From hence he proceeded to Staten Island, where he arrived about the middle of July. His first act was to send ashore by a flag, a circular letter to the several late governors of the colonies, acquainting them with his civil and military powers, and desiring that they would publish as generally as possible, for the information of the people, a declaration which accompanied the letter. In this piece, he informed the public of the powers with which his brother and he were endued under the late Parliament, of granting general or particular pardons to all those who in the tumult and disaster of the times might have deviated from their just allegiance, and who were willing by a speedy return to their duty to reap the benefits of the royal favour; and of declaring any colony, province, county, town, port, district, or place to be at the peace of his Majesty, in which case the penal provisions of that law would cease

* Annual Register.

in their favour. It also promised that a due consideration should be had to the services of all persons who contributed to the restoration of the public tranquillity.

These papers being immediately transmitted by General Washington to the Congress, were as speedily published by them in all the newspapers, with a preface or comment of their own in the form of a resolution, that the publication was in order that the people of the United States might be informed of what nature are the commissioners, and what the terms with the expectation of which the court of Great Britain had endeavoured to amuse and disarm them, and that the few who still remained suspended by a hope founded on either the justice or moderation of that event, might now at length be convinced that the valour alone of their country is to save its liberties.

About the same time various flags were sent ashore by Lord Howe accompanied by some of his officers, with a letter directed to George Washington, Esq., which that general refused to receive, as not being addressed with the title, and in the form due to the rank which he held under the United States. The Congress highly applauded the dignity of this conduct in a public resolution passed for the purpose; by which they directed that in future none of their commanders should receive any letter or message from the enemy but such as should be addressed to them in the characters which they respectively sustained.

At length, Adjutant General Pallison was sent to New York by General Howe with a letter addressed to George Washington, &c. &c. &c. That general received him with great politeness, and the

usual ceremony of blindfolding in passing through the fortifications was dispensed with in his favour. The adjutant regretted in the name of his principals the difficulties which had arisen with respect to addressing the letters, declared their high esteem for his person and character, and that they did not mean to derogate from the respect due to his rank, and thus it was hoped the *et ceteras* would remove the impediments to their correspondence. The general replied that a letter directed to any person in a public character should have some description or indication of it, otherwise it would appear a mere private letter; that it was true the *et ceteras* implied everything, but they also implied anything. and that he should absolutely decline any letter directed to him as a private person, when it related to his public station.

A long conference ensued on the subject of prisoners, and the complaints which were made on both sides, particularly by the Congress, relative to the treatment they received. The adjutant having observed that the commissioners were armed with great powers, that they would derive the greatest pleasure from effecting an accommodation, and that himself wished to have that visit considered as making the first advance towards that desirable object: he received for answer, among other things, that, by what had appeared, their powers were only to grant pardons; that those who had committed no fault wanted no pardon, and that they themselves were only defending what they considered their indisputable right. The adjutant was received by General Washington in great military state, and the utmost politeness was observed on both sides.

There can be no doubt that the arrival of the two Howes as commissioners had long been looked forward to by many, with the hope that they would be authorised to offer some terms of conciliation which the American States could accept, and that thus an opportunity would be offered of continuing a connexion with Great Britain which long habit had endeared. The prevalence of this feeling gave great concern to the general. As early as May, he had written in a private letter as follows :—

“Many members of Congress, in short the representatives of whole provinces, are still feeding themselves on the dainty food of reconciliation ; and though they will not allow that the expectation of it has any influence on their judgments, as far as respects preparations for defence, it is but too obvious that it has an operation on every part of their conduct, and is a clog to all their proceedings. It is not in the nature of things to be otherwise ; for no man who entertains a hope of seeing this dispute speedily and equitably adjusted by commissioners will go to the same expense or incur the same hazards to prepare for the worst event, that he will who believes that he must conquer or submit unconditionally and take the consequences, such as confiscation or hanging.”

To whatever causes the fact may be attributed it is manifest that a fearful disparity existed between the British and the American forces. General Howe commanded a force of twenty-four thousand men, well disciplined and abundantly supplied with everything necessary to take the field ; he daily expected to be reinforced by a second detachment of German troops, and he was supported by a fleet judiciously fitted to its destined service. The state

of General Washington's forces may be best inferred by the following extract:—

“ In my letter of the fifth I enclosed a general return of the army under my immediate command, but I imagine the following statement will give congress a more perfect idea, though not a more agreeable one, of our situation:—For the several posts on New York, Long and Governor's Islands, and Paulus Hook, we have fit for duty ten thousand five hundred and fourteen; sick present, three thousand and thirty-nine; sick absent, six hundred and twenty-nine: on command, two thousand nine hundred and forty-six; on furlough, ninety-seven; total, seventeen thousand two hundred and twenty-five. In addition to these, we are only certain of Colonel Smallwood's battalion in case of an immediate attack. Our posts, too, are much divided, having waters between many of them, and some distant from others many miles. These circumstances, sufficiently distressing of themselves, are much aggravated by the sickness that prevails throughout the army. Every day more or less are taken down, so that the proportion of men that may come in cannot be considered as a real and serviceable augmentation on the whole. These things are melancholy, but they are nevertheless true; I hope for better. Under every disadvantage my utmost exertions shall be employed to bring about the great end we have in view, and so far as I can judge from the professions and apparent disposition of my troops I shall have their support. The superiority of the enemy and the expected attack do not seem to have depressed their spirits; these considerations lead me to think, that, though the appeal may not terminate so happily in our

favour as I could wish, yet they will not succeed in their views without considerable loss. Any advantage they may get I trust will cost them dear."

A part of Washington's forces was stationed on Long Island, and during the illness of Major-general Green was commanded by Major-general Sullivan; the remainder occupied New York, Governor's Island, and Paulus Hook. General Washington was fully aware of the importance which attached to his first hostile movements. He therefore spent the interval occasioned by the delay of the enemy in efforts to improve the discipline of his troops, and to inspire them with somewhat of his own enthusiasm:—

"The time," said he, in his orders, "is now near at hand which must probably determine whether Americans are to be free men or slaves; whether they are to have any property they can call their own; whether their houses and their farms are to be pillaged and destroyed, and themselves consigned to a state of wretchedness from which no human efforts will deliver them. The fate of unborn millions will now depend, under God, on the courage and conduct of this army. Our cruel and unrelenting enemy have left us only the choice of a brave resistance or the most abject submission. We have therefore to resolve to conquer or to die. Our own, our country's honour calls upon us for a vigorous and manly exertion; and if we now shamefully fall we shall become infamous to the whole world. Let us then rely on the goodness of our cause, and the aid of the Supreme Being in whose hands victory is, to encourage us to great and noble actions. The eyes of all our countrymen are now upon us, and we shall have their blessings and

praises if happily we are the instruments of saving them from the tyranny meditated against them. Let us, therefore, animate and encourage each other, and show the whole world that a free man contending for liberty on his own ground is superior to every slavish mercenary on earth."

In the midst of the preparations for the engagement the general received intelligence, through Congress, of the brilliant successes of the American arms in South Carolina; these he promptly announced in his orders for the encouragement of his army:—

"This glorious example," he wrote, "of our troops under the like circumstances with ourselves, the general hopes will animate every officer and soldier to imitate, and even to outdo them, when the enemy shall make the same attempt on us. With such a bright example before us of what can be done by brave men fighting in defence of their country, we shall be loaded with a double share of shame and infamy if we do not acquit ourselves with courage and manifest a determined resolution to conquer or die. With the hope and confidence that this army will have an equal share of honour and success, the general most earnestly exhorts every officer and soldier to pay the utmost attention to his arms and health; to have the former in the best order for action, and by cleanliness and care to preserve the latter; to be exact in their discipline, obedient to their superiors, and vigilant on duty. With such preparations and a suitable spirit there can be no doubt that, by the blessing of Heaven, we shall repel our cruel invaders, preserve our country, and gain the greatest honour."

The possession of Long Island* is essential to the defence of New York. It had been determined in a council of war, to fortify a camp at Brooklyn, fronting New York; and stretching across that end of Long Island, from East river to Gowan's cove. The rear of this encampment was defended by batteries on Red Hook and Governor's Island, and by works on East river, which secured the communication with the city. In front of the encampment ran a range of hills from east to west across the island. These were covered with wood, and were steep, but could anywhere be ascended by infantry. Over this range were three passes, leading by three roads to Brooklyn ferry.

A strong detachment of the American army was posted on Long Island, under the command of General Green, who made himself intimately acquainted with the passes on the hills; but unfortunately becoming sick, General Sullivan succeeded him in this command, only a few days before active operations commenced. The main body of the American army remained on York Island. A flying camp, composed of militia, was formed at Amboy, to prevent the depredations of the enemy in New Jersey; and a force was stationed near New Rochelle, and at East and West Chester on the Sound, to check the progress of the enemy, should they attempt to land above King's-bridge, and enclose the Americans on York Island. The headquarters of General Washington were in the city, but he was daily over at Brooklyn, to inspect the

* The following particulars of the battle of Brooklyn are supplied by Bancroft's Life of Washington, and are, in fact, an abridgment of the most authentic statement from the pen of Judge Marshall.

state of that camp, and to make the best arrangements circumstances would admit.

An immediate attack being expected on Long Island, General Sullivan was reinforced, and directed carefully to watch the passes.

On the 26th of July, the main body of the British troops, with a large detachment of Germans, landed under cover of the ships, on the southwestern extremity of Long Island. A regiment of militia stationed on the coast retreated before them to the heights. A large reinforcement was sent to the camp at Brooklyn, and the command of the post given to General Putnam, who was particularly charged to guard the woods, and to hold himself constantly prepared to meet the assault of the enemy.

On the same day the British, in three divisions, took post upon the south skirt of the wood; General Grant upon their left, near the coast; the German General de Heister in the centre, at Flatbush; and General Clinton upon their right, at Flatland. The range of hills only now separated the two armies, and the different posts of the British were distant from the American camp from four to six miles. Upon their left a road to Brooklyn lay along the coast by Gowan's cove, before General Grant's division. From Flatbush a direct road ran to the American camp, in which the Germans might proceed. General Clinton might either unite with the Germans, or take a more eastern route, and fall into the Jamaica road by the way of Bedford. These three roads unite near Brooklyn. On the pass of Flatbush, the Americans had flung up a small redoubt, mounted it with artillery, and manned it with a body of

troops. Major-general Sullivan continued to command on the heights. On the 26th of August, in the evening General Clinton, without beat of drum, marched with the infantry of his division, a troop of light horse, and fourteen field pieces, to gain the defile on the Jamaica road. A few hours before day he surprised an American party stationed here to give the alarm of an approaching enemy; and, undiscovered, seized the pass. At day-light he passed the heights, and descended into the plain on the side of Brooklyn. Early in the morning, General de Heister, at Flatbush, and General Grant upon the west coast, opened a cannonade upon the American troops, and began to ascend the hill; but they moved very slowly, as their object was to draw the attention of the American commander from his left, and give General Clinton opportunity to gain the rear of the American troops stationed on the heights. General Putnam, in the apprehension that the serious attack would be made by De Heister and Grant, sent detachments to reinforce General Sullivan and Lord Sterling at the defiles, through which those divisions of the enemy were approaching. When General Clinton had passed the left flank of the Americans, about eight o'clock in the morning of the 27th, De Heister and Grant vigorously ascended the hill; the troops which opposed them bravely maintained their ground, until they learned their perilous situation from the British columns, which were gaining their rear.

As soon as the American left discovered the progress of General Clinton, they attempted to return to the camp at Brooklyn; but their flight was stopped by the front of the British column.

In the meantime the Germans pushed forward from Flatbush, and the troops in the American centre, under the immediate command of General Sullivan, having also discovered that their flank was turned, and that the enemy was gaining their rear, in haste retreated towards Brooklyn. Clinton's columns continuing to advance, intercepted them, they were attacked in front and rear, and alternately driven by the British on the Germans, and by the Germans on the British. Desperate as their situation was, some regiments broke through the enemy's lines, and regained the fortified camp; but most of the detachments upon the American left and centre were either killed or taken prisoners.

The detachment on the American right, under Lord Sterling, behaved well, and maintained a severe conflict with General Grant for six hours, until the van of General Clinton's division having crossed the whole island gained their rear. Lord Sterling perceived his danger, and found that his troops could be saved only by an immediate retreat over a creek near the cove. He gave orders to this purpose; and to facilitate their execution, he in person attacked Lord Cornwallis, who, by this time having gained the coast, had posted a small corps in a house, just above the place where the American troops must pass the creek. The attack was bravely made with four hundred men, who, in the opinion of their commander, were upon the point of dislodging Cornwallis; but his lordship being reinforced from his own column, and General Grant attacking Lord Sterling in the rear, this brave band was overpowered by numbers, and those who survived were compelled to surrender themselves prisoners of war; but this spirited

assault gave opportunity for a large proportion of the detachment to escape.

The loss of the Americans on this occasion, compared with the number engaged, was great; General Washington stated it at a thousand men; but his returns probably included only the regular regiments. General Howe, in an official letter, made the prisoners to amount to one thousand and ninety-seven. Among these were Major-general Sullivan, and Brigadier-generals Stirling and Woodhul. The amount of the killed was never with precision ascertained. Numbers were supposed to have been drowned in the creek, and some to have perished in the mud on the marsh. The British loss acknowledged by General Howe, was twenty-one officers, and three hundred and forty-six privates killed, wounded, and taken.

General Washington passed over to Brooklyn in the heat of the action; but unable to rescue his men from their perilous situation, was constrained to be the inactive spectator of the slaughter of his best troops. On this occasion, he is said for a moment to have lost his customary equanimity, and to have burst into the most violent exclamations of grief. He was now sensible of the eminent peril which would follow from his awaiting the regular approaches of the enemy. His troops were without tents, many were suffering from sickness, and all from fatigue. Moreover, the movements of the British fleet indicated an intention to force a passage into the East River, and thus cut off the retreat of the troops into New York. By this measure the whole army would doubtless have been lost. The general, therefore, determined on an immediate removal of the army from Long Island

to New York. This he effected with such perfect silence and order, that although the sound of the entrenching tools of the British were distinctly heard, their escape, favoured by a heavy mist, was unperceived till their rear was out of the reach of the British fire. The announcement of this event is found in the following letter, from General Washington to Congress:—

“New York, August 31st, 1776.

“SIR,

“INCLINATION as well as duty would have induced me to give congress the earliest information of my removal and that of the troops, from Long Island and its dependencies to this city, the night before last; but the extreme fatigue which myself and family have undergone, as much from the weather since as from the engagement on the 27th, rendered me and them entirely unfit to take pen in hand. Since Monday scarce any of us have been out of the lines till our passage across the East river was effected yesterday morning; and for forty-eight hours preceding that, I had hardly been off my horse, and never closed my eyes, so that I was quite unfit to write or dictate till this morning.

“Our retreat was made without any loss of men or ammunition, and in better order than I expected from troops in the situation ours were. We brought off all our cannon and stores except a few heavy pieces, which, in the condition of the earth by a long continued rain, we found, upon trial, impracticable. The wheels of the carriages sticking up to the hobs rendered it impossible for our whole force to drag them. We left but little provisions on

the island, except some cattle which had been driven within our lines, and which, after many attempts to force across the water, we found impossible to effect circumstanced as we were.

“ I have enclosed a copy of the council of war held previous to the retreat, to which I beg leave to refer the congress for the reasons, or many of them, that led to the adoption of that measure.

“ Yesterday evening and last night a party of our men were employed in bringing our stores, cannon, tents, &c., from Governor's Island, which they nearly completed. Some of the heavy cannon remain there still, but (I expect) they will be got away to-day.

“ In the engagement on the 27th, Generals Sullivan and Stirling were made prisoners. The former had been permitted, on his parole, to return for a little time. From my Lord Stirling I had a letter by General Sullivan (a copy of which I have the honour to transmit) that contains his information of the engagement with his brigade. It is not so full and certain as I could wish; he was hurried most probably, as his letter was unfinished—nor have I been yet able to obtain an exact account of our loss;—we suppose it from seven hundred to a thousand killed and taken.

“ General Sullivan says Lord Howe is extremely desirous of seeing some of the members of Congress, for which purpose he was allowed to come out and to communicate to them what has passed between him and his lordship. I have consented to his going to Philadelphia, as I do not mean, nor conceive it right, to withhold or prevent him from giving such information as he possesses in this instance.

“ I am much hurried and engaged in arranging and making new dispositions of our forces, the movements of the enemy requiring them to be immediately had; and therefore have only time to add, that I am, with my best regards to Congress, their and your most obedient, &c.

“ GEORGE WASHINGTON.”

CHAPTER XVI.

State of the Army after the Retreat to New York—Opinions of General Washington—His Letter to Congress—Attempt of Lord Howe towards Negotiation—Failure of the same—Movements of the British Army—Important Correspondence of General Washington with Congress.

THE conduct of the retreat from Long Island to New York, was confessed by the enemy themselves to be a master stroke of military skill, and to reflect the highest honour upon General Washington. But the defeat which occasioned it, threw a gloomy shade upon the affairs of America. The power of sustaining ill-success, without any diminution of spirit and energy is peculiar to veteran troops. In the minds of the American soldiers these unfortunate events inspired unmingled disappointment and apprehension. Under these circumstances, the manner in which the army was constituted, was found to be almost fatal to the cause. The limited period for which the troops were enlisted, and which with many was on the point of expiring, induced them as far as possible to shrink from active service, and to devolve its dangers upon their successors.

To the commander-in-chief this state of things was matter of the most painful concern. Had he held in his own hands the disposal of the war, or possessed the powers which are ordinarily vested

in officers of his rank, his decision of character would doubtless have soon manifested itself in the adoption of the admirable measures which he recommended. In his present position that decision of mind could only be exhibited in its rarest form, in the patient endurance of failure, with but a distant prospect of remedy, and in the maintenance of unwavering energy in the absence of all the stimulants which usually incite to it. That he did not sink under the accumulated disappointments, which now began to overtake him, may indeed be attributed in part to the robustness and insusceptibility of his physical and mental constitution ; but far more to that all-absorbing patriotism which lightened every burden, and sweetened every suffering sustained in the cause of American freedom.

His views of the present position of the army may be given in his own words, addressed to Congress shortly after the retreat to New York.

His letter is as follows :—

New York, September 2nd, 1776.

“ SIR,

“ As my intelligence of late has been rather unfavourable, and would be received with anxiety and concern, peculiarly happy should I esteem myself were it in my power at this time to transmit such information to Congress as would be more pleasing and agreeable to their wishes ; but unfortunately for me — unfortunately for them, it is not.

“ Our situation is truly distressing. The check our detachment sustained on the twenty-seventh

ultimo, has dispirited too great a number of our troops, and filled their minds with apprehension and despair. The militia, instead of calling forth their utmost efforts to a brave and manly opposition in order to repair our losses, are dismayed, intractable, and impatient to return. Great numbers of them have gone off, in some instances almost by whole regiments, by half ones, and by companies at a time. This circumstance of itself, independent of others, when fronted by a well appointed enemy superior in numbers to our whole collected force, would be sufficiently disagreeable :—but when their example has infected another part of the army,—when their want of discipline, and refusal of almost every kind of restraint and government have produced a like conduct but too common to the whole, and an entire disregard of that order and subordination so necessary to the well-doing of an army, and which had been inculcated before as well as the nature of our military establishment would admit of,—our condition is still more alarming, and with the deepest concern I am obliged to confess my want of confidence in the generality of the troops.

“All these circumstances fully confirm the opinion I ever entertained, and which I more than once in my letters took the liberty of mentioning to Congress, that no dependence could be put in a militia or other troops than those enlisted and embodied for a longer period than our regulations heretofore have prescribed. I am persuaded, and as fully convinced as I am of any one fact that has happened, that our liberties must of necessity be greatly hazarded, if not entirely lost, if their defence is left to any but a permanent standing

army. I mean one to exist during the war. Nor would the expense incident to the support of such a body of troops as would be competent to almost every exigency, far exceed that which is daily incurred by calling in succour and new enlistments, which, when effected, are not attended with any good consequences. Men who have been free and subject to no controul, cannot be reduced to order in an instant, and the privileges and exemptions they claim and will have, influence the conduct of others; and the aid derived from them is nearly counterbalanced by the disorder, irregularity, and confusion they occasion.

“ Our number of men at present fit for duty is under twenty thousand; they were so by the last returns and best accounts I could get after the engagement on Long Island, since which numbers have deserted. I have ordered General Mercer to send the men intended for the flying camp to this place, about a thousand in number, and to try with the militia, if practicable, to make a diversion upon Staten Island.

“ Till of late I had no doubt in my own mind of defending this place, nor should I have yet, if the men would do their duty, but this I despair of. It is painful and extremely grating to me to give such unfavourable accounts, but it would be criminal to conceal the truth at so critical a juncture. Every power I possess shall be exerted to serve the cause, and my first wish is, that whatever may be the event, the Congress will do me the justice to think so.

“ If we should be obliged to abandon the town, ought it to stand as winter quarters for the enemy? They would derive great conveniences from it on

the one hand, and much property would be destroyed on the other.—It is an important question, but will admit of but little time for deliberation. At present, I dare say the enemy mean to preserve it if they can. If Congress, therefore, should resolve on the destruction of it, the resolution should be a profound secret, as the knowledge of it will make a capital change in their plans.

“ I have the honour to be, &c.

“ GEORGE WASHINGTON.”

In this letter, the general's concern for the pecuniary resources of his country, probably induced him to omit the suggestion of one of the great desiderata to the want of which the late miscarriage was attributable. The American army (if it deserved the name) contained not a single corps of cavalry.

“ Had the general,” says Judge Marshall, “ been furnished with a few troops of light horse to serve merely as videts, to watch the motions of the enemy, it is probable that the movement so decisive of the fate of the day could not have been made unnoticed.”

Lord Howe took advantage* of the effect which this defeat had produced on the minds of the Congress by opening a negociation in the exercise of his power as a commissioner. For this purpose, General Sullivan was sent on parole to Philadelphia with a verbal message from Lord Howe, stating, that although he could not treat with that body in the character which they had assumed, yet he was desirous of a conference with a deputation of the members in the character of

* Annual Register.

private gentlemen, and that he and his brother, the general, had full powers to adjust the dispute between Great Britain and America. He stated that he wished a compact might be settled at this time, when no decisive blow was struck, and neither party could say they were compelled to enter into the agreement; that if the Congress were disposed to treat, many things which they had not asked might, and ought to be granted to them, and that if, upon the conference, any probable ground of an accommodation appeared, the authority of Congress must be afterwards acknowledged, or the compact could not be complete."

The Congress returned for answer that being the representatives of the Free and Independent States of America, they could not with propriety send any of their members to confer with him in their private characters; but that, ever desirous of establishing peace on reasonable terms, they would send a committee of their body to know if he had any authority to treat with persons appointed by Congress for that purpose in behalf of America, and what that authority was, and to hear such propositions as he should think fit to make upon the subject.

Dr. Franklin, Mr. Adams, and Mr. Rutledge, being appointed as a committee on this occasion, waited accordingly on Lord Howe in Staten Island. They sum up the account of this conference, which they laid before the Congress, in the following words:—

"Upon the whole, it did not appear to your committee that his lordship's commission contained any other authority of importance than what is contained in the act of Parliament, viz. that of

granting pardon, with such exceptions as the commissioners shall think proper to make, and of declaring America, or any part of it, to be in the King's peace upon submission. For as to the power of inquiring into the state of America, which his lordship mentioned to us, and of conferring and consulting with any persons the commissioners might think proper, and representing the result of such conversations to the ministry, who (provided the colonies would subject themselves) might, after all, or might not, at their pleasure, make any alterations in the former instructions to governors, or propose in Parliament any amendment of the acts complained of, we apprehend any expectation from the effect of such a power would have been too uncertain and precarious to be relied on by America, had she still continued in her state of dependence."

The British army* now in perfect possession of Long Island, fronted and threatened New York from its extreme southern point to the part opposite to the northern boundary of Long Island—a space of about nine miles. The two armies were separated only by the East River, which is about thirteen hundred yards across, and on both sides of which batteries were erected, which kept up an incessant cannonade upon each other. Immediately after the victory at Brooklyn, dispositions were made to attack New York. A part of the fleet sailed round Long Island and appeared in the Sound, a large bay which separates that island from Connecticut, and which is connected with the East River by a narrow channel called Hell-gate.

* Judge Marshall's Life of Washington

Two frigates passed between Governor's Island, and Red-Hook up the East River without receiving any injury from the batteries, and were sheltered behind a small island from the American artillery, while the admiral, with the main body of the fleet, lay at anchor close in with Governor's Island, ready to pass up either the North or East River, or both, and act against any part of York Island.

These movements (especially the appearance of part of the fleet with some transports in the Sound, and the encampment towards the north of Long Island) indicated a disposition not to make an attack directly on New York, as had been expected, but to land somewhere about Kingsbridge, to take a position which cut off the communication of the American army with the country, and thereby force them to a battle, which, if unfortunate in its issue, which there was much reason to believe it must be, would infallibly destroy them.

The immediately subsequent events may best be narrated in the words of General Washington in the following letters to Congress.

“New York, September 8th, 1776.

“SIR,

“SINCE I had the honour of addressing you on the sixth instant, I have called a council of the general officers, in order to take a full and comprehensive view of our situation, and thereupon form such a plan of future defence as may be immediately pursued, and subject to no other alteration than a change of operations on the enemy's side may occasion.

“ Before the landing of the enemy on Long Island, the point of attack could not be known, or any satisfactory judgment formed of their intentions. It might be on Long Island, on Bergen, or directly on the city. This made it necessary to be prepared for each, and has occasioned an expense of labour which now seems useless, and is regretted by those who form a judgment from after-knowledge. But I trust, men of discernment will think differently, and see that by such works and preparations we have not only delayed the operations of the campaign till it is too late to effect any capital incursion into the country, but have drawn the enemy's forces to one point and obliged them to [*disclose*] their plan, so as to enable us to form our defence on some certainty.

“ It is now extremely obvious from all intelligence,—from their movements, and every other circumstance,—that having landed their whole army on Long Island (except about four thousand on Staten Island), they mean to enclose us on the island of New York by taking post in our rear while the shipping effectually secure the front; and thus, either by cutting off our communication with the country, oblige us to fight them on their own terms, or surrender at discretion,—or by a brilliant stroke endeavour to cut this army in pieces, and secure the collection of arms and stores, which they well know we shall not be able soon to replace.

“ Having therefore their system unfolded to us, it became an important consideration how it could be most successfully opposed. On every side there is a choice of difficulties; and every measure on our part (however painful the reflection is from experience) to be formed with some apprehension

that all our troops will not do their duty. In deliberating on this great question, it was impossible to forget, that history, our own experience, the advice of our ablest friends in Europe, the fears of the enemy, and even the declarations of Congress, demonstrate, that on our side the war should be defensive—(it has ever been called a war of posts);—that we should on all occasions avoid a general action, nor put anything to the risk, unless compelled by a necessity into which we ought never to be drawn.

“ The arguments on which such a system was founded were deemed unanswerable; and experience has given her sanction. With these views, and being fully persuaded that it would be presumption to draw out our young troops into open ground against their superiors both in number and discipline, I have never spared the spade and pickaxe. I confess I have not found that readiness to defend even strong posts at all hazards, which is necessary to derive the greatest benefit from them. The honour of making a brave defence does not seem to be a sufficient stimulus when success is very doubtful, and the falling into the enemy's hands probable: but I doubt not this will be gradually attained.—We are now in a strong post, but not an impregnable one, nay, acknowledged by every man of judgment to be untenable, unless the enemy will make the attack upon lines when they can avoid it, and their movements indicate that they mean to do so.

“ To draw the whole army together in order to arrange the defence proportionate to the extent of lines and works, would leave the country open for an approach, and put the fate of this army and

its stores on the hazard of making a successful defence in the city, or the issue of an engagement out of it. On the other hand, to abandon a city which has been by some deemed defensible, and on whose works much labour has been bestowed, has a tendency to dispirit the troops and enfeeble our cause. It has also been considered as the key to the northern country. But as to that, I am fully of opinion that the establishing of strong posts at Mount Washington on the upper part of this island, and on the Jersey side opposite to it, with the assistance of the obstructions already made (and which may be improved) in the water, not only the navigation of Hudson's river, but an easier and better communication may be more effectually secured between the northern and southern states. This, I believe, every one acquainted with the situation of the country will readily agree to; and it will appear evident to those who have an opportunity of recurring to good maps.

“ These and many other consequences, which will be involved in the determination of our next measure, have given our minds full employ, and led every one to form a judgment as the various objects presented themselves to his view.

“ The post at Kingsbridge is naturally strong, and is pretty well fortified: the heights about it are commanding, and might soon be made more so. These are important objects, and I have attended to them accordingly. I have also removed from the city all the stores and ammunition except what was absolutely necessary for its defence, and made every other disposition that did not essentially interfere with that object,—carefully keeping in view, until it should be absolutely determined on full

consideration, how far the city was to be defended at all events.

“ In resolving points of such importance, many circumstances peculiar to our own army also occur. Being only provided for a summer's campaign, their clothes, shoes, and blankets, will soon be unfit for the change of weather which we every day feel. At present we have not tents for more than two-thirds, many of them old and worn out: but if we had a plentiful supply, the season will not admit of continuing in them long.—The case of our sick is also worthy of much consideration. Their number, by the returns, forms at least one-fourth of the army. Policy and humanity require they should be made as comfortable as possible.

“ With these and many other circumstances before them, the whole council of general officers met yesterday in order to adopt some general line of conduct to be pursued at this important crisis. I intended to have procured their separate opinions on each point; but time would not admit. I was therefore obliged to collect their sense more generally than I could have wished.—All agreed the town would not be tenable if the enemy resolved to bombard and cannonade it: but the difficulty attending a removal operated so strongly, that a course was taken between abandoning it totally and concentrating our whole strength for its defence: nor were some a little influenced in their opinion, to whom the determination of Congress was known, against an evacuation totally, as they were led to suspect Congress wished it to be maintained at every hazard.

“ It was concluded to arrange the army under three divisions;—five thousand to remain for the

defence of the city ;—nine thousand to Kingsbridge and its dependencies, as well to possess and secure those posts, as to be ready to attack the enemy who are moving eastward on Long Island, if they should attempt to land on this side ;—the remainder to occupy the intermediate space, and support either ;—that the sick should be immediately removed to Orangetown, and barracks prepared at Kingsbridge with all expedition to cover the troops.

“ There were some general officers, in whose judgment and opinion much confidence is to be reposed, that were for a total and immediate removal from the city,—urging the great danger of one part of the army being cut off before the other can support it, the extremities being at least sixteen miles apart ;—that our army, when collected, is inferior to the enemy ;—that they can move with their whole force to any point of attack, and consequently must succeed by weight of numbers, if they have only a part to oppose them ;—that, by removing from hence, we deprive the enemy of the advantage of their ships, which will make at least one half of the force to attack the town ;—that we should keep the enemy at bay, put nothing to the hazard, but at all events keep the army together, which may be recruited another year ;—that the unspent stores will also be preserved ; and, in this case, the heavy artillery can also be secured. But they were overruled by a majority, who thought for the present a part of our force might be kept here, and attempt to maintain the city a while longer.

“ I am sensible a retreating army is encircled with difficulties ; that the declining an engagement subjects a general to reproach ; and that the com-

mon cause may be affected by the discouragement it may throw over the minds of many. Nor am I insensible of the contrary effects, if a brilliant stroke could be made with any probability of success, especially after our loss upon Long Island. But, when the fate of America may be at stake on the issue,—when the wisdom of cooler moments and experienced men have decided that we should protract the war if possible,—I cannot think it safe or wise to adopt a different system when the season for action draws so near a close.

“ That the enemy mean to winter in New York there can be no doubt:—that, with such an armament, they can drive us out, is equally clear.—The Congress having resolved that it should not be destroyed, nothing seems to remain but to determine the time of their taking possession. It is our interest and wish to prolong it as much as possible, provided the delay does not affect our future measures.

“ The militia of Connecticut is reduced from six thousand to less than two thousand, and in a few days will be merely nominal. The arrival of some Maryland troops, &c., from the flying camp, has in a great degree supplied the loss of men: but the ammunition they have carried away will be a loss sensibly felt. The impulse for going home was so irresistible it answered no purpose to oppose it. Though I would not discharge, I have been obliged to acquiesce; and it affords one more melancholy proof how delusive such dependencies are.

“ Inclosed I have the honour to transmit a general return, the first I have been able to procure for some time; also a report of Captain Newell

from our works at Hell-gate. Their situation is extremely low, and the Sound so very narrow, that the enemy have them much within their command.

“ P. S.—The inclosed information this minute came to hand.—I am in hopes we shall henceforth get regular intelligence of the enemy’s movements.”

* * * *

“ Since my letter of the eighth nothing material has occurred, except that the enemy have possessed themselves of Montezore’s Island, and landed a considerable number of troops upon it. This island lies in the mouth of Haerlem River, which runs out of the Sound into the North River, and will give the enemy an easy opportunity of landing either on the low grounds of Morrisania, if their views are to seize and possess the passes above Kingsbridge, or on the plains of Haerlem, if they design to intercept and cut off the communication between our several posts. I am making every disposition and arrangement that the divided state of our troops will admit of, and which appear most likely and the best calculated to oppose their attacks; for I presume there will be several.—How the event will be, God only knows; but you may be assured that nothing in my power, circumstanced as I am, shall be wanting to effect a favourable and happy issue.

“ I have the honour to be, &c.

“ GEORGE WASHINGTON.”

CHAPTER XVII.

Washington's Representations to Congress of the existing State of the American Army—Removal to the White Plains—Defeat of the Americans in this Position—Capture of the Garrison at Fort Washington, and Destruction of the Stores at Fort Lee—Successful Descent of the British on the Jerseys—Brilliant Success of Washington at Trenton.

THE situation of the American army on the heights of Haerlem was, in one respect, precisely what the commander-in-chief desired. It was one which allowed of the frequent occurrence of skirmishes, which might accustom the American soldiery to oppose the superior discipline of the British troops. The advantage of this arrangement had been shown in the successful affair of the 16th, which in some measure mitigated the alarm and discouragement occasioned by the severe defeat mentioned in the general's letter of that date. Still the general aspect of affairs impressed him with the deepest concern, and he again conveyed his opinions on the crisis to Congress, in the following letter to the President:—

“ Haerlem, October 4th, 1776.

“ SIR,

“ BEFORE I knew of the late resolutions of Congress which you did me the honour to

inclose in your letter of the twenty-fourth, and before I was favoured with the visit of your committee, I took the liberty of giving you my sentiments on several points which seemed to be of importance.—I have no doubt but that the committee will make such report of the state and condition of the army, as will induce Congress to believe that nothing but the most vigorous exertions can put matters upon such a footing as to give this continent a fair prospect of success. Give me leave to say, Sir,—I say it with due deference and respect (and my knowledge of the facts, added to the importance of the cause, and the stake I hold in it, must justify the freedom),—that your affairs are in a more unpromising way than you seem to apprehend.

“Your army, as I mentioned in my last, is on the eve of its political dissolution. True it is, you have voted a larger one in lieu of it: but the season is late; and there is a material difference between voting of battalions and raising of men. In the latter there are more difficulties than congress are aware of, which makes it my duty (as I have been informed of the prevailing sentiments of this army) to inform them, that unless the pay of the officers, especially that of the field officers, is raised, the chief part of those that are worth retaining will leave the service at the expiration of the present term, as the soldiers will also, if some greater encouragement is not offered them than twenty dollars and a hundred acres of land.

“Nothing less, in my opinion, than a suit of clothes annually given to each non-commissioned officer and soldier, in addition to the pay and bounty, will avail; and I question whether that

will do, as the enemy (from the information of one John Mash, who, with six others, was taken by our guards) are giving ten pounds bounty for recruits, and have got a battalion under Major Rogers nearly completed upon Long Island.

“ Nor will less pay, according to my judgment, than I have taken the liberty of mentioning in the inclosed estimate, retain such officers as we could wish to have continued. The difference per month in each battalion will amount to better than a hundred pounds. To this may be added the pay of the staff-officers ; for it is presumable they will also require an augmentation : but, being few in number, the sum will not be greatly increased by them, and consequently is a matter of no great moment : but it is a matter of no small importance to make the several offices desirable. When the pay and establishment of an officer once become objects of interested attention, the sloth, negligence, and even disobedience of orders, which at this time but too generally prevail, will be purged off. But while the service is viewed with indifference,—while the officer conceives that he is rather conferring than receiving an obligation,—there will be a total relaxation of all order and discipline, and everything will move heavily on, to the great detriment of the service, and inexpressible trouble and vexation of the general.

“ The critical situation of our affairs at this time will justify my saying that no time is to be lost in making fruitless experiments. An unavailing trial of a month to get an army upon the terms proposed may render it impracticable to do it at all, and prove fatal to our cause ; as I am not sure whether any rubs in the way of our enlistments, or

unfavourable turn in our affairs, may not prove the means of the enemy recruiting men faster than we do. To this may be added the inextricable difficulty of forming one corps out of another, and arranging matters with any degree of order, in the face of an enemy who are watching for advantages.

“ At Cambridge, last year, where the officers (and more than a sufficiency of them) were all upon the spot, we found it a work of such extreme difficulty to know their sentiments (each having some terms to propose), that I despaired once of getting the arrangements completed: and I do suppose, that at least a hundred alterations took place before matters were finally adjusted. What must it be then under the present regulation, where the officer is to negotiate this matter with the state he comes from, distant perhaps two or three hundred miles?—some of whom, without leave or licence from me, set out to make personal application, the moment the resolve got to their hands. What kind of officers these are, I leave Congress to judge.

“ If an officer of reputation (for none other should be applied to) is asked to stay, what answer can he give, but in the first place, that he does not know whether it is at his option to do so, no provision being made in the resolution of Congress, even recommendatory of this measure; consequently, that it rests with the state he comes from (surrounded perhaps with a variety of applications, and influenced probably by local attachments) to determine whether he can be provided for or not? In the next place, if he is an officer of merit, and knows that the state he comes from is to furnish more battalions than it at present has in the ser-

vice, he will scarcely, after two years' faithful services, think of continuing in the rank he now bears, when new creations are to be made, and men appointed to offices (nowise superior in merit, and ignorant perhaps of service) over his head. A committee, sent to the army from each state, may upon the spot fix things with a degree of propriety and certainty, and is the only method I can see of bringing matters to a decision with respect to the officers of the army. But what can be done in the meanwhile towards the arrangement in the country I know not. In the one case you run the hazard of losing your officers; in the other, of encountering delay, unless some method could be devised of forwarding both at the same instant.

“ Upon the present plan, I plainly foresee an intervention of time between the old and new army, which must be filled up with militia (if to be had), with whom no man who has any regard for his own reputation can undertake to be answerable for consequences. I shall also be mistaken in my conjectures, if we do not lose the most valuable officers in this army under the present mode of appointing them: consequently, if we have an army at all, it will be composed of materials not only entirely raw, but (if uncommon pains are not taken) entirely unfit; and I see such a distrust and jealousy of military power, that the commander-in-chief has not an opportunity, even by recommendation, to give the least assurances of reward for the most essential services. In a word, such a cloud of perplexing circumstances appear before me, without one flattering hope, that I am thoroughly convinced, unless the most vigorous and decisive exertions are immediately adopted to remedy these evils, that the

certain and absolute loss of our liberties will be the inevitable consequence; as one unhappy stroke will throw a powerful weight into the scale against us, enabling General Howe to recruit his army as fast as we shall ours,—numbers being disposed [*to join him*], and many actually doing so already. Some of the most probable remedies, and such as experience has brought to my more intimate knowledge, I have taken the liberty to point out: the rest I beg leave to submit to the consideration of Congress.

“I ask pardon for taking up so much of their time with my opinions. But I should betray that trust which they and my country have reposed in me, were I to be silent upon a matter so extremely interesting.—With the most perfect esteem,

“I have the honour to be, &c.,

“GEORGE WASHINGTON.”

In compliance with the suggestions of this letter the pay of the officers was raised, and other measures adopted for the improvement of discipline.

Meanwhile General Howe became convinced that no successful attack could be made upon the American camp from the side of New York. He determined, therefore, either to compel General Washington to abandon his position, or, by enclosing him in it, to ensure the destruction of his army. For this purpose he embarked a great part of his army in flat-bottomed boats, and passing through the strait called Hell-gate, landed about nine miles from the camp on the heights of Haerlem; while Earl Percy, with some British and Hessian troops, continued near Haerlem to cover New York.

It has been observed * that this latter arrangement would have been extremely dangerous had General Washington commanded a veteran army upon whom he could rely. This however was not the case. Moreover the protection of the British fleet was found at this, as at all other times, to be invaluable. This was the great respect in which the British forces possessed an advantage over the Americans; and so important a circumstance should never be omitted from the account in estimating the merits of the campaign now under review.

The obstructions in the North River having proved insufficient to stop the passage of the British vessels, it was declared by Washington impracticable to hold any longer the position which he had occupied. The primary object of the enemy was to cut off his communication with the eastern colonies, and in case this should not precipitate an engagement, to inclose him completely in his intrenchments on the north of York Island. Measures were now taken for moving the army so as to extend its left towards the White Plains beyond the right of the enemy, while a garrison was left for the protection of Fort Washington and the lines of Haerlem and Kingsbridge, so that the main body of the American army formed a line of intrenched camps extending from twelve to thirteen miles from Valentine's Hill to the White Plains. To this spot the British troops moved with slowness and circumspection. The compactness which they endeavoured to preserve did not however prevent

* Annual Register.

some skirmishes, in which the commander-in-chief expressed his satisfaction with the conduct of his soldiers.

At length, having gradually drawn in his outposts, General Washington took possession of the heights on the east side of the river Brunx in front of the British army. Following his usual plan, he entrenched his camp with remarkable rapidity, and no less by this and by those former arrangements by which he had avoided a disadvantageous engagement, he obtained from the British general and from the contemporary British records the highest praise for his talents as a commander.

On the 28th of October General Howe determined upon an attack, and for this purpose ordered a large body of troops to pass the river and ascend the heights on which the main body of the Americans was posted. This service was performed with that perfect order and determined courage for which the British army are so much distinguished. They ascended the heights under a heavy fire with great gallantry. The American militia were borne away by the steady energy of their attack, but the regulars long sustained it with great bravery. At length they were overpowered by numbers and totally routed. In the evening additional detachments of British troops were ordered to the heights which had been gained in the day, and in this position they lay upon their arms during the night. In the morning it was perceived that the Americans had drawn back their encampment and greatly strengthened their position by additional works. Under these circumstances General Howe determined to defer the attack until the arrival of fresh reinforcements. These reinforcements arrived on

the 30th, and the next morning was fixed for the attack. In the night, however, so heavy a storm occurred as prevented the execution of this purpose. Howe therefore resolved, if possible, to possess himself of the heights behind the American army. On perceiving this, Washington withdrew his forces, on the 1st of November, to the heights of Newcastle (or North Castle), about five miles from the White Plains, and so strongly fortified this excellent position that the British general, despairing of success in any attempt to force it, marched his army away in order to attack Fort Washington; in which, as has been said, a considerable garrison had been left. The design of this army was at once conjectured by the American general. In communicating the information to Congress, he observes:—

“ I cannot indulge the idea that General Howe, supposing him to be going to New York, means to close the campaign and to sit down without attempting something more. I think it highly probable and almost certain that he will make a descent with part of his troops into the Jerseys; and as soon as I am satisfied that the present manœuvre is real, and not a feint, I shall use all the means in my power to forward a part of our force to counteract his designs.

“ I expect the enemy will lead their force against Fort Washington and invest it immediately. From some advice it is an object that will attract their earliest attention.”

He immediately wrote to Mr. Livingston, governor of New Jersey, advising him of the measures which he apprehended, recommending that the militia should be held in constant readiness, and

that the stock and everything which could yield support to the British army should be destroyed, or removed from the coasts where they would be available to the enemy.

While the British forces were marching to Kingsbridge, three ships of war sailed up the Hudson in spite of the American batteries, and of the obstruction which had been sunk in the channel of the river. This circumstance at once convinced Washington that the fort was no longer tenable: he therefore wrote to General Green as follows:—

“If we cannot prevent vessels from passing up, and the enemy are possessed of the surrounding country, what valuable purpose can it answer to attempt to hold a post from which the expected benefit cannot be derived? I am therefore inclined to think it will not be prudent to hazard the men and stores at Fort Washington, but as you are on the spot, I leave it to you to give such orders respecting the evacuation of the place as you may think most advisable.”

General Green, however, placed undue confidence in the strength of the fort, and fearing the effect which the evacuation of so important a post might have on the country, he determined to defend it. Upon General Howe summoning the garrison, Colonel Magaw, the commanding officer, replied that he would defend it to the last extremity. This summons was communicated to General Washington, who had now arrived at Fort Lee. In the dead of night he left Fort Lee in a boat, and made for the besieged post. On his way he met with Generals Green and Putnam, who assured him of the high probability of the miscarriage of

praises if happily we are the instruments of saving them from the tyranny meditated against them. Let us, therefore, animate and encourage each other, and show the whole world that a free man contending for liberty on his own ground is superior to every slavish mercenary on earth."

In the midst of the preparations for the engagement the general received intelligence, through Congress, of the brilliant successes of the American arms in South Carolina; these he promptly announced in his orders for the encouragement of his army:—

"This glorious example," he wrote, "of our troops under the like circumstances with ourselves, the general hopes will animate every officer and soldier to imitate, and even to outdo them, when the enemy shall make the same attempt on us. With such a bright example before us of what can be done by brave men fighting in defence of their country, we shall be loaded with a double share of shame and infamy if we do not acquit ourselves with courage and manifest a determined resolution to conquer or die. With the hope and confidence that this army will have an equal share of honour and success, the general most earnestly exhorts every officer and soldier to pay the utmost attention to his arms and health; to have the former in the best order for action, and by cleanliness and care to preserve the latter; to be exact in their discipline, obedient to their superiors, and vigilant on duty. With such preparations and a suitable spirit there can be no doubt that, by the blessing of Heaven, we shall repel our cruel invaders, preserve our country, and gain the greatest honour."

The possession of Long Island* is essential to the defence of New York. It had been determined in a council of war, to fortify a camp at Brooklyn, fronting New York; and stretching across that end of Long Island, from East river to Gowan's cove. The rear of this encampment was defended by batteries on Red Hook and Governor's Island, and by works on East river, which secured the communication with the city. In front of the encampment ran a range of hills from east to west across the island. These were covered with wood, and were steep, but could anywhere be ascended by infantry. Over this range were three passes, leading by three roads to Brooklyn ferry.

A strong detachment of the American army was posted on Long Island, under the command of General Green, who made himself intimately acquainted with the passes on the hills; but unfortunately becoming sick, General Sullivan succeeded him in this command, only a few days before active operations commenced. The main body of the American army remained on York Island. A flying camp, composed of militia, was formed at Amboy, to prevent the depredations of the enemy in New Jersey; and a force was stationed near New Rochelle, and at East and West Chester on the Sound, to check the progress of the enemy, should they attempt to land above King's-bridge, and enclose the Americans on York Island. The headquarters of General Washington were in the city, but he was daily over at Brooklyn, to inspect the

* The following particulars of the battle of Brooklyn are supplied by Bancroft's Life of Washington, and are, in fact, an abridgment of the most authentic statement from the pen of Judge Marshall.

about Bergen, and the militia but scantily supplied the places of the deserters. In addition to these adverse circumstances, the inhabitants of the Jerseys were in a great measure indifferent to the cause of their country, and many of the most wealthy testified a desire to return to their old allegiance. So high had this spirit run in the county of Monmouth, that General Washington was obliged to despatch some militia to suppress an insurrection of the royalists there. The danger of the majority of the state deserting the cause of independence when the enemy should come among them, and thus occasioning a disruption in the political union of America, gave him the most serious alarm.

Being unable to resist the crossing of the Passaic, behind which his forces lay, Washington retired before the advancing enemy to Newark, and thence, on the very day on which Lord Cornwallis entered the plain, fled before him to Brunswick. While here, the term of enlistment of the troops who were drawn from Maryland and Jersey expired, and he had the extreme mortification of witnessing the gradual diminution of his feeble army in the very sight of a pursuing enemy. So many indeed of the militia who were engaged to serve till the first of January following, deserted the army that guards were placed on roads to the Delaware, and the ferries over it, in order to apprehend and send back to the camp such soldiers as might be found without a written permission of absence.

Again General Washington urged the governor of New Jersey to call out the strength of the state to his support. But it was not in the power of the governor to afford the required assistance.

Even that part of the country which was well affected to the cause of independence was overawed by the presence of the enemy.

At Brunswick * the troops were continued in motion for the purpose of concealing their weakness, and retarding the advance of the enemy, by creating an opinion that the Americans meditated an attack in turn. From this place the general even moved some men towards them, as if intending offensive operations, and he continued in the town till they were actually in view; but as the advanced guards showed themselves on the opposite side of the bridge, he marched out of Brunswick, and leaving Lord Stirling in Princetown with two brigades from Virginia and Delaware, consisting of twelve hundred men, to watch the enemy, he proceeded himself with the residue of the army to Trenton. He had already directed the boats on the Delaware, from Philadelphia upwards for seventy miles, to be collected and guarded, so that a hope might be reasonably entertained that the progress of the enemy would be stopped at this river, and that in the mean time reinforcements might arrive which would enable him to dispute its passage.

Having with great labour transported the few remaining military stores and baggage over the Delaware, he determined to remain as long as possible with the small force which still adhered to him on the north side of that river.

The army which, under the command of General Washington, was thus pursued through the Jerseys, was aided by no other cavalry than a small

* Judge Marshall's Life of Washington.

In the meantime the Germans pushed forward from Flatbush, and the troops in the American centre, under the immediate command of General Sullivan, having also discovered that their flank was turned, and that the enemy was gaining their rear, in haste retreated towards Brooklyn. Clinton's columns continuing to advance, intercepted them, they were attacked in front and rear, and alternately driven by the British on the Germans, and by the Germans on the British. Desperate as their situation was, some regiments broke through the enemy's lines, and regained the fortified camp; but most of the detachments upon the American left and centre were either killed or taken prisoners.

The detachment on the American right, under Lord Sterling, behaved well, and maintained a severe conflict with General Grant for six hours, until the van of General Clinton's division having crossed the whole island gained their rear. Lord Sterling perceived his danger, and found that his troops could be saved only by an immediate retreat over a creek near the cove. He gave orders to this purpose; and to facilitate their execution, he in person attacked Lord Cornwallis, who, by this time having gained the coast, had posted a small corps in a house, just above the place where the American troops must pass the creek. The attack was bravely made with four hundred men, who, in the opinion of their commander, were upon the point of dislodging Cornwallis; but his lordship being reinforced from his own column, and General Grant attacking Lord Sterling in the rear, this brave band was overpowered by numbers, and those who survived were compelled to surrender themselves prisoners of war; but this spirited

assault gave opportunity for a large proportion of the detachment to escape.

The loss of the Americans on this occasion, compared with the number engaged, was great; General Washington stated it at a thousand men; but his returns probably included only the regular regiments. General Howe, in an official letter, made the prisoners to amount to one thousand and ninety-seven. Among these were Major-general Sullivan, and Brigadier-generals Stirling and Woodhul. The amount of the killed was never with precision ascertained. Numbers were supposed to have been drowned in the creek, and some to have perished in the mud on the marsh. The British loss acknowledged by General Howe, was twenty-one officers, and three hundred and forty-six privates killed, wounded, and taken.

General Washington passed over to Brooklyn in the heat of the action; but unable to rescue his men from their perilous situation, was constrained to be the inactive spectator of the slaughter of his best troops. On this occasion, he is said for a moment to have lost his customary equanimity, and to have burst into the most violent exclamations of grief. He was now sensible of the eminent peril which would follow from his awaiting the regular approaches of the enemy. His troops were without tents, many were suffering from sickness, and all from fatigue. Moreover, the movements of the British fleet indicated an intention to force a passage into the East River, and thus cut off the retreat of the troops into New York. By this measure the whole army would doubtless have been lost. The general, therefore, determined on an immediate removal of the army from Long Island

them to hope for more auspicious events, and not to relax their energies when their country most required them. It is impossible to doubt that to the undisturbed steadiness of Washington's mind under these misfortunes, and to the influence exerted on the minds of others, and particularly of the Congress, by the majesty of his demeanour, America mainly owes her independence.

Having removed his baggage and stores to the south side of the Delaware, and sent a detachment of twelve hundred men to Princeton, in order to reanimate the people of Jersey by an appearance of aggression, he waited patiently for reinforcements. This moment of inaction he embraced to lay before Congress his reiterated remonstrances against the fatal system of short enlistments. He hoped that experience, by its severe chastisement, would produce the conviction upon that body which his arguments and persuasion had not fully effected.

He urged Congress to establish corps of cavalry, artillerists, and engineers; and pressed upon them the necessity of establishing additional regiments of infantry. He knew that objections to these measures would arise on account of the expense, and from the consideration that the old battalions were not yet filled: these he obviated by observing thus:—

“More men would in this way on the whole be raised, and our funds are not the only object now to be taken into consideration. We find,” he added, “that the enemy are daily gathering strength from the disaffected. This strength, like a snow-ball by rolling, will increase, unless some means can be devised to check effectually the progress of the enemy's arms. Militia may possibly do it for

the island, except some cattle which had been driven within our lines, and which, after many attempts to force across the water, we found impossible to effect circumstanced as we were.

“ I have enclosed a copy of the council of war held previous to the retreat, to which I beg leave to refer the congress for the reasons, or many of them, that led to the adoption of that measure.

“ Yesterday evening and last night a party of our men were employed in bringing our stores, cannon, tents, &c., from Governor's Island, which they nearly completed. Some of the heavy cannon remain there still, but (I expect) they will be got away to-day.

“ In the engagement on the 27th, Generals Sullivan and Stirling were made prisoners. The former had been permitted, on his parole, to return for a little time. From my Lord Stirling I had a letter by General Sullivan (a copy of which I have the honour to transmit) that contains his information of the engagement with his brigade. It is not so full and certain as I could wish; he was hurried most probably, as his letter was unfinished—nor have I been yet able to obtain an exact account of our loss;—we suppose it from seven hundred to a thousand killed and taken.

“ General Sullivan says Lord Howe is extremely desirous of seeing some of the members of Congress, for which purpose he was allowed to come out and to communicate to them what has passed between him and his lordship. I have consented to his going to Philadelphia, as I do not mean, nor conceive it right, to withhold or prevent him from giving such information as he possesses in this instance.

“ I am much hurried and engaged in arranging and making new dispositions of our forces, the movements of the enemy requiring them to be immediately had ; and therefore have only time to add, that I am, with my best regards to Congress, their and your most obedient, &c.

“ GEORGE WASHINGTON.”

out America, and by none more than by General Washington. Sullivan, upon whom the command of his army devolved upon his removal, hastened to join the commander-in-chief, whose forces were augmented by this accession to nearly seven thousand men. He also received a still further reinforcement from the northern army under General Gates. Finding his numbers sufficiently increased to allow of active operations, he conceived a scheme by which he might relieve the desponding spirits of his countrymen by a single masterly stroke. He no sooner perceived the scattered position of the British posts on the Delaware than he resolved upon attacking them all simultaneously.

For this purpose the night of the 25th of December was chosen. About two thousand four hundred men, under the immediate command of General Washington, were ordered to cross the Delaware about nine miles above Trenton, to attack that post. General Irvine was directed to cross with his division at Trenton ferry, and secure the bridge below the town, so as to obstruct the retreat of the enemy in that direction. General Cadwallader received orders to cross at Bristol ferry, and assault the post at Burlington. The weather was intensely cold, and so much ice was in the rivers that Generals Irvine and Cadwallader found it impossible to cross with the artillery, and the execution of the plan was reserved for General Washington. The delay incurred in crossing obliged the general to give up the hope of surprising the post at Trenton by night. He therefore marched his little army to Trenton by two roads, called the River and the Pennington Roads, and by each of which the distance was about nine miles.

He himself took the latter route, and arrived at the British outposts at Trenton at eight o'clock in the morning. He assumed that the two divisions would perform the march in about the same time, and therefore at once drove in the picquet guard, and three minutes afterwards had the satisfaction of hearing the fire of his other division, who were performing the same service on the River Road.

Colonel Rawle, a very gallant British officer, immediately drew out his forces in as much order as possible to repel the assailants, but fell mortally wounded in the commencement of the action. His troops immediately filed off to the Princeton road, which, when Washington perceived, he threw a detachment in their front which intercepted them. Finding themselves surrounded, and their artillery seized, they laid down their arms and surrendered, to the number of one thousand. Had not the extreme severity of the weather forbidden the other divisions to cross the Delaware, the result of this enterprising stroke would doubtless have been to sweep away the British from all their posts on the Delaware, and thus establish a firm footing in the Jerseys. As it was, the general wisely forbore all further aggression, and re-crossed the Delaware with his prisoners, six pieces of artillery, a thousand stand of arms, and some valuable military stores.

ultimo, has dispirited too great a number of our troops, and filled their minds with apprehension and despair. The militia, instead of calling forth their utmost efforts to a brave and manly opposition in order to repair our losses, are dismayed, intractable, and impatient to return. Great numbers of them have gone off, in some instances almost by whole regiments, by half ones, and by companies at a time. This circumstance of itself, independent of others, when fronted by a well appointed enemy superior in numbers to our whole collected force, would be sufficiently disagreeable :—but when their example has infected another part of the army,—when their want of discipline, and refusal of almost every kind of restraint and government have produced a like conduct but too common to the whole, and an entire disregard of that order and subordination so necessary to the well-doing of an army, and which had been inculcated before as well as the nature of our military establishment would admit of,—our condition is still more alarming, and with the deepest concern I am obliged to confess my want of confidence in the generality of the troops.

“All these circumstances fully confirm the opinion I ever entertained, and which I more than once in my letters took the liberty of mentioning to Congress, that no dependence could be put in a militia or other troops than those enlisted and embodied for a longer period than our regulations heretofore have prescribed. I am persuaded, and as fully convinced as I am of any one fact that has happened, that our liberties must of necessity be greatly hazarded, if not entirely lost, if their defence is left to any but a permanent standing

army. I mean one to exist during the war. Nor would the expense incident to the support of such a body of troops as would be competent to almost every exigency, far exceed that which is daily incurred by calling in succour and new enlistments, which, when effected, are not attended with any good consequences. Men who have been free and subject to no controul, cannot be reduced to order in an instant, and the privileges and exemptions they claim and will have, influence the conduct of others; and the aid derived from them is nearly counterbalanced by the disorder, irregularity, and confusion they occasion.

“Our number of men at present fit for duty is under twenty thousand; they were so by the last returns and best accounts I could get after the engagement on Long Island, since which numbers have deserted. I have ordered General Mercer to send the men intended for the flying camp to this place, about a thousand in number, and to try with the militia, if practicable, to make a diversion upon Staten Island.

“Till of late I had no doubt in my own mind of defending this place, nor should I have yet, if the men would do their duty, but this I despair of. It is painful and extremely grating to me to give such unfavourable accounts, but it would be criminal to conceal the truth at so critical a juncture. Every power I possess shall be exerted to serve the cause, and my first wish is, that whatever may be the event, the Congress will do me the justice to think so.

“If we should be obliged to abandon the town, ought it to stand as winter quarters for the enemy? They would derive great conveniences from it on

conducted by General Mercer, and a very sharp action ensued; which, however, was not of very long duration. The militia, of which the advanced army was principally composed, and the few regulars attached to them, were not strong enough to maintain their ground. General Mercer was mortally wounded while gallantly exerting himself to rally his broken troops, and the van was entirely routed. But the fortune of the day was soon changed. The main body of the army, led by General Washington in person, followed close in the rear, and attacked the enemy with great spirit. Persuaded that defeat would irretrievably ruin the affairs of America, he advanced in the very front of danger, and exposed himself to the hottest fire of the enemy. He was also well supported by those troops who had a few days before saved their country at Trenton; so that the British in turn were compelled to give way. Their line was broken and the two regiments separated from each other. Colonel Mawhood, who commanded that in front, forced his way through a part of the American troops and reached Maidenhead. The fifty-fifth regiment, which was in the rear, retreated by the way of Hillsborough to Brunswick. The vicinity of the British forces at Maidenhead secured Colonel Mawhood from being pursued, and General Washington pressed forward to Princeton. The regiment remaining in that place saved itself without having sustained much loss, by a precipitate retreat to Brunswick.

In this action upwards of one hundred of the enemy were killed on the spot, and nearly three hundred were taken prisoners. The loss of the Americans in killed was somewhat less, but in this

number was included General Mercer, a valuable officer from Virginia, who had served with the commander-in-chief in the war against the French and Indians, which terminated in 1763, and was greatly esteemed by him. Colonels Haslett and Potter, two brave and excellent officers from Delaware and Pennsylvania, Captain Neal of the artillery, Captain Fleming, who on that day commanded the seventh Virginia regiment, and five other valuable officers were also amongst the slain.

On the appearance of day-light Lord Cornwallis discovered that the American army had moved off in the night, and immediately conceived the whole plan which had been formed by Washington. He was under extreme apprehensions for Brunswick, where magazines of great value had been collected, and where it has been understood the military chest, containing about seventy thousand pounds, was deposited. Breaking up his camp he commenced a rapid march to that place, in order to afford it protection, and was close on the rear of the American army before they could leave Princeton.

General Washington now again found himself in a very perilous situation. His small army was exhausted with extreme fatigue. His troops had been without sleep all of them one night, and some of them two. They were without blankets, many of them barefooted, and otherwise very thinly clad. He was closely pursued by an enemy very much superior in point of numbers, well clothed, not harassed by want of sleep, and who must necessarily come up with him before he could accomplish his designs on Brunswick, if any opposition should there be offered to him. Under these circumstances he

very wisely determined to abandon the remaining part of his original plan, and having broken down the bridges over Hillstone Creek, between Princeton and Brunswick, he took the road leading up the country to Pluckemin, where his army were permitted to refresh themselves and take that rest which they so greatly required. Lord Cornwallis continued his march to Brunswick, which he reached that night. General Mathews commanded at that place, and while he paraded his troops for defence against the American general whom he expected, he used the utmost industry in guarding against the worst by removing the military stores to a place of greater safety.

The sufferings of the American army had been so great from the severity of the season and the very active service in which they had been engaged, their complaints, especially on the part of the militia, were so loud, their numbers were reducing so fast by returning home and by sickness, that General Washington found it impracticable to prosecute farther offensive operations, and deemed it absolutely necessary to retire to Morristown, in order to put his men under cover and to give them some repose.

The successful and brilliant enterprises which closed this campaign at once raised the spirits and stimulated the courage of the Americans, and impressed the mind of the British general with the necessity of the utmost circumspection and with a high respect for the military talents of General Washington. It was hoped that their effect would be to draw to the field so large a force as would enable the general to drive the enemy out of New Jersey, and to confine them in New

Two frigates passed between Governor's Island, and Red-Hook up the East River without receiving any injury from the batteries, and were sheltered behind a small island from the American artillery, while the admiral, with the main body of the fleet, lay at anchor close in with Governor's Island, ready to pass up either the North or East River, or both, and act against any part of York Island.

These movements (especially the appearance of part of the fleet with some transports in the Sound, and the encampment towards the north of Long Island) indicated a disposition not to make an attack directly on New York, as had been expected, but to land somewhere about Kingsbridge, to take a position which cut off the communication of the American army with the country, and thereby force them to a battle, which, if unfortunate in its issue, which there was much reason to believe it must be, would infallibly destroy them.

The immediately subsequent events may best be narrated in the words of General Washington in the following letters to Congress.

“New York, September 8th, 1776.

“SIR,

“SINCE I had the honour of addressing you on the sixth instant, I have called a council of the general officers, in order to take a full and comprehensive view of our situation, and thereupon form such a plan of future defence as may be immediately pursued, and subject to no other alteration than a change of operations on the enemy's side may occasion.

was increased to three regiments; a resolution passed the Congress for raising three thousand cavalry, and for the establishment of a corps of engineers. Still the conflicting powers of Congress, and of the separate states rendered the arrangement of the army exceedingly difficult, and gave rise to much insubordination. Another cause of vexation to General Washington was found in the severe treatment of the American prisoners in the possession of the British. He remonstrated upon the subject with General Howe, but only received an insolent reply, that they would receive no more than their due if they were all summarily hanged as rebels. Upon this, Washington assured him in a dignified answer that his conduct to the British prisoners would be regulated by that which was shown towards his countrymen,—a threat which the humanity of his heart forbade him to execute.

A similar spirit to that manifested by the British general, was also conspicuous in the conduct of the home government. On the 7th of February 1777, a bill was presented to the house of commons "to empower his Majesty to secure and detain persons charged with, or suspected of the crime of high treason, committed in North America, or on the high seas, or of the crime of piracy." This bill was met by all the friends of liberty with the most indignant opposition. By Mr. Fox, in particular, it was attacked with great power. In this proposition on the part of ministers, he saw distinctly the working of sentiments opposed not to American liberty in particular, but to universal liberty, and he exposed its flagrant character and horrible tendency with a degree of vehemence inspired less by sympathy with the Americans,

that all our troops will not do their duty. In deliberating on this great question, it was impossible to forget, that history, our own experience, the advice of our ablest friends in Europe, the fears of the enemy, and even the declarations of Congress, demonstrate, that on our side the war should be defensive—(it has ever been called a war of posts);—that we should on all occasions avoid a general action, nor put anything to the risk, unless compelled by a necessity into which we ought never to be drawn.

“ The arguments on which such a system was founded were deemed unanswerable; and experience has given her sanction. With these views, and being fully persuaded that it would be presumption to draw out our young troops into open ground against their superiors both in number and discipline, I have never spared the spade and pickaxe. I confess I have not found that readiness to defend even strong posts at all hazards, which is necessary to derive the greatest benefit from them. The honour of making a brave defence does not seem to be a sufficient stimulus when success is very doubtful, and the falling into the enemy's hands probable: but I doubt not this will be gradually attained.—We are now in a strong post, but not an impregnable one, nay, acknowledged by every man of judgment to be untenable, unless the enemy will make the attack upon lines when they can avoid it, and their movements indicate that they mean to do so.

“ To draw the whole army together in order to arrange the defence proportionate to the extent of lines and works, would leave the country open for an approach, and put the fate of this army and

its stores on the hazard of making a successful defence in the city, or the issue of an engagement out of it. On the other hand, to abandon a city which has been by some deemed defensible, and on whose works much labour has been bestowed, has a tendency to dispirit the troops and enfeeble our cause. It has also been considered as the key to the northern country. But as to that, I am fully of opinion that the establishing of strong posts at Mount Washington on the upper part of this island, and on the Jersey side opposite to it, with the assistance of the obstructions already made (and which may be improved) in the water, not only the navigation of Hudson's river, but an easier and better communication may be more effectually secured between the northern and southern states. This, I believe, every one acquainted with the situation of the country will readily agree to; and it will appear evident to those who have an opportunity of recurring to good maps.

“ These and many other consequences, which will be involved in the determination of our next measure, have given our minds full employ, and led every one to form a judgment as the various objects presented themselves to his view.

“ The post at Kingsbridge is naturally strong, and is pretty well fortified: the heights about it are commanding, and might soon be made more so. These are important objects, and I have attended to them accordingly. I have also removed from the city all the stores and ammunition except what was absolutely necessary for its defence, and made every other disposition that did not essentially interfere with that object,—carefully keeping in view, until it should be absolutely determined on full

consideration, how far the city was to be defended at all events.

“ In resolving points of such importance, many circumstances peculiar to our own army also occur. Being only provided for a summer's campaign, their clothes, shoes, and blankets, will soon be unfit for the change of weather which we every day feel. At present we have not tents for more than two-thirds, many of them old and worn out: but if we had a plentiful supply, the season will not admit of continuing in them long.—The case of our sick is also worthy of much consideration. Their number, by the returns, forms at least one-fourth of the army. Policy and humanity require they should be made as comfortable as possible.

“ With these and many other circumstances before them, the whole council of general officers met yesterday in order to adopt some general line of conduct to be pursued at this important crisis. I intended to have procured their separate opinions on each point; but time would not admit. I was therefore obliged to collect their sense more generally than I could have wished.—All agreed the town would not be tenable if the enemy resolved to bombard and cannonade it: but the difficulty attending a removal operated so strongly, that a course was taken between abandoning it totally and concentrating our whole strength for its defence: nor were some a little influenced in their opinion, to whom the determination of Congress was known, against an evacuation totally, as they were led to suspect Congress wished it to be maintained at every hazard.

“ It was concluded to arrange the army under three divisions;—five thousand to remain for the

“ Those colonists are now called rebels ; they are stigmatised with every base and abusive epithet in the English language. Yet, my lords, I remember, when this country was waging war with the united powers of France and Spain ; when there was a rebellion, a Scotch rebellion, within this land ; I remember, when our fleets were useless, our armies unsuccessful, that these men, now described as the blackest and basest of all rebels, nay more, that very colony which has been represented as the hot-bed of sedition and treason,—that colony, against which the keenest lightnings of government are denounced, and have been directed ; I remember, I say, my lords, this very colony sending forth four regiments of undisciplined militia, which gave the first check to France in her proud career, and erected the standard of conquest on the walls of Louisburg. But we need not point out particular facts, in proof of the bravery, the zeal, the duty, and affection of this people ; the annals of the last war will tell such of your lordships, as are not old enough to remember, how they fought, and how they bled ; they will tell you how generously they contributed, how like loving brethren they shared the common burden and the danger. These, my lords, are the unhappy men you have cruelly devoted to destruction ; whose towns you would raze, whose commerce you would annihilate, whose liberties you would destroy by the sword, whose properties you would confiscate, and whose persons you would enslave ; these are the people whom your ministers would extirpate. What has been the system pursued by administration, and what have been the measures taken for carrying it into execution ? Your system has been a government erected on the ruins of the

constitution, and founded in conquest, and you have swept all Germany of its refuse as its means. There is not a petty, insignificant prince, whom you have not solicited for aid. You are become the suitors at every German court, and you have your ministers enrolled in the German chancery, as the contracting parties in behalf of this once great and glorious country. The laurels of Britain are faded, her arms are disgraced, her negotiations are spurned at, and her councils fallen into contempt. My lords, you have vainly tried to conquer America, by the aid of German mercenaries, by the arms of twenty thousand undisciplined German boors, gleaned and collected from every obscure corner of the country; you have subsidised their masters; you have lavished the public treasures on them; and what have you effected? Nothing, but forcing the colonies to declare themselves independent states. You have roused them, my lords, to act with vigour and resolution; you have united and combined them; you have by this unnatural act cemented them, and given them but one soul. Their breasts are filled with indignation; they are fired with just resentments; they burn with ardour to avenge their injuries, and retaliate with interest on their cruel and merciless oppressors; yes, my lords, I say, three millions of freemen will never submit to twenty thousand mercenaries. No, my lords, the idea is preposterous; the attempt is absurd; as well might I expect to conquer them with this crutch, as to suppose that America will ever submit to so contemptible a force. I would recommend peace to your lordships, at all events; the longer the unhappy contest is continued, the more difficult it

will be to conciliate, and the less able we shall be to prosecute with vigour or effect, or accommodate with honour or advantage. Ministers, as they have blundered from the beginning, are led into a fatal error respecting our natural enemies, the French. They imagine that nothing is to be dreaded from that quarter, because France has not interfered directly in favour of America. But, my lords, do ministers, when they build such mighty things on this circumstance, recollect, that they argue as if France were mad? Would they have France run the risk, hazard, and expense of a war, when Britain is doing all for France she can possibly wish or desire? It was a gross misconception to suppose, that France ever thought a single minute about giving a direct aid to the colonies: she never meant, my lords, to interrupt this country in its wild career, or stand between it and its colonies. No, my lords, she has taken care from her conduct, to feed and nourish the mad notions of conquest and dominion which have unfortunately prevailed within these walls. She has been equally sedulous to give just that degree of countenance and protection which have hitherto served to keep the civil war alive, so as to baffle your designs, and to waste your strength. This cruel and unnatural war, my lords, I dread, will be a fatal war; you have proscribed your own children; you have turned a deaf ear to their dutiful petitions, their fervent entreaties; and have interpreted their honest constitutional remonstrances into treason and rebellion. You have, my lords, lost America; you have poured the riches of America into the lap of the House of Bourbon. Will France forget her own interest so much as to think of war? To

CHAPTER XVII.

Washington's Representations to Congress of the existing State of the American Army—Removal to the White Plains—Defeat of the Americans in this Position—Capture of the Garrison at Fort Washington, and Destruction of the Stores at Fort Lee—Successful Descent of the British on the Jerseys—Brilliant Success of Washington at Trenton.

THE situation of the American army on the heights of Haerlem was, in one respect, precisely what the commander-in-chief desired. It was one which allowed of the frequent occurrence of skirmishes, which might accustom the American soldiery to oppose the superior discipline of the British troops. The advantage of this arrangement had been shown in the successful affair of the 16th, which in some measure mitigated the alarm and discouragement occasioned by the severe defeat mentioned in the general's letter of that date. Still the general aspect of affairs impressed him with the deepest concern, and he again conveyed his opinions on the crisis to Congress, in the following letter to the President:—

“ Haerlem, October 4th, 1776.

“ SIR,

“ BEFORE I knew of the late resolutions of Congress which you did me the honour to

inclose in your letter of the twenty-fourth, and before I was favoured with the visit of your committee, I took the liberty of giving you my sentiments on several points which seemed to be of importance.—I have no doubt but that the committee will make such report of the state and condition of the army, as will induce Congress to believe that nothing but the most vigorous exertions can put matters upon such a footing as to give this continent a fair prospect of success. Give me leave to say, Sir,—I say it with due deference and respect (and my knowledge of the facts, added to the importance of the cause, and the stake I hold in it, must justify the freedom),—that your affairs are in a more unpromising way than you seem to apprehend.

“Your army, as I mentioned in my last, is on the eve of its political dissolution. True it is, you have voted a larger one in lieu of it: but the season is late; and there is a material difference between voting of battalions and raising of men. In the latter there are more difficulties than congress are aware of, which makes it my duty (as I have been informed of the prevailing sentiments of this army) to inform them, that unless the pay of the officers, especially that of the field officers, is raised, the chief part of those that are worth retaining will leave the service at the expiration of the present term, as the soldiers will also, if some greater encouragement is not offered them than twenty dollars and a hundred acres of land.

“Nothing less, in my opinion, than a suit of clothes annually given to each non-commissioned officer and soldier, in addition to the pay and bounty, will avail; and I question whether that

upon any of the British who had separated themselves from their corps, and, in some skirmishes, behaved with great courage and skill. These little successes induced General Howe to change his plan of operation. He determined to strengthen himself by contracting his posts. The different positions which he had previously taken for the purpose of covering and retaining possession of the country were all, except two, abandoned; and the whole British force in the Jerseys was concentrated at Brunswick and at Amboy, at the mouth of the Raritan. These posts were judiciously selected to enable him both to pass by land to Philadelphia, and to keep up his communications with New York. Even this alteration, however, was not effected without loss. General Maxwell, with a corps of Jersey militia, had been ordered to the neighbourhood of Elizabeth Town, and, on the British evacuating that place, he made an attack on their rear in which about seventy prisoners and a part of their baggage were taken. By this movement of the British general, almost the whole state of the Jerseys may be considered as once more added to the Union, and freed from the power of the enemy. Almost every day produced some skirmish which increased the confidence of the Americans, and the caution of General Howe. Both these effects, however, are in a great measure to be traced to ignorance respecting the real force of General Washington; and, perhaps, few things in the war are more remarkable than the invariable concealment of his condition from the enemy. Had General Howe been aware of the smallness of the American forces, nothing could have saved them from total defeat.

Some idea may be formed of the condition in which General Washington now found himself, from the following passages in his correspondence. On the 23rd of February 1777, he thus writes to Congress from head-quarters :—

“Our delicate and truly critical situation for want of a sufficient force to oppose the enemy, who are now ready, and will before many days elapse take the field, induced me to expect that the troops raising in the southern states, and intended for this army, would march in companies or half companies as they were made up, without waiting for their regiments to be complete. Policy strongly suggested the propriety of the measure, and I requested it, but to my great anxiety and surprise I am told that this line of conduct is totally neglected, though a great number of recruits are actually engaged ; I must entreat Congress to interpose again with their most pressing application, and command that this expedient may be adopted without a moment's delay. No injury can result from it, because a sufficient number of proper officers can and must be left to recruit the corps to their full complement.

“Nor will my fears respecting the state of our arms allow me to be silent on that head. Let the states be urged to send their men equipped with them, and every other necessary if possible : I know not what supplies may be in store elsewhere, or in the power of Congress, but they must not depend upon their being furnished here with any, or but with very few :—no human prudence or precaution could secure but a small part of those belonging to the public, and in the hands of the soldiery, from being embezzled and carried off

vice, he will scarcely, after two years' faithful services, think of continuing in the rank he now bears, when new creations are to be made, and men appointed to offices (nowise superior in merit, and ignorant perhaps of service) over his head. A committee, sent to the army from each state, may upon the spot fix things with a degree of propriety and certainty, and is the only method I can see of bringing matters to a decision with respect to the officers of the army. But what can be done in the meanwhile towards the arrangement in the country I know not. In the one case you run the hazard of losing your officers; in the other, of encountering delay, unless some method could be devised of forwarding both at the same instant.

“ Upon the present plan, I plainly foresee an intervention of time between the old and new army, which must be filled up with militia (if to be had), with whom no man who has any regard for his own reputation can undertake to be answerable for consequences. I shall also be mistaken in my conjectures, if we do not lose the most valuable officers in this army under the present mode of appointing them: consequently, if we have an army at all, it will be composed of materials not only entirely raw, but (if uncommon pains are not taken) entirely unfit; and I see such a distrust and jealousy of military power, that the commander-in-chief has not an opportunity, even by recommendation, to give the least assurances of reward for the most essential services. In a word, such a cloud of perplexing circumstances appear before me, without one flattering hope, that I am thoroughly convinced, unless the most vigorous and decisive exertions are immediately adopted to remedy these evils, that the

five Virginian regiments, not amounting to more than as many hundred men, and parts of two or three other continental battalions all very weak. The remainder of the army will be composed of militia from this state and Pennsylvania, on whom little dependence can be put, as they come and go when they please. The enemy must be ignorant of our numbers and situation, or they would never suffer us to remain unmolested: and I almost tax myself with imprudence in committing the secret to paper; not that I distrust you, of whose inviolable attachment I have had so many proofs, but for fear the letter should fall into other hands than those for which it is intended."

Notwithstanding the almost incredible weakness of the American forces General Washington engaged in frequent skirmishes, in some of which he gained decisive advantages over the numerous foraging parties of the British, one of the most signal of which occurred at the very time at which the foregoing statements were made.

As the usual season for active operations approached the solicitude of the commander-in-chief was greatly augmented by the slowness with which the army increased. The division of that power amidst numerous subordinate members, which, for the successful prosecution of war, must be concentrated in one supreme and responsible head, was felt as almost a fatal disadvantage; and the advances which were made were evidently owing to the universal confidence placed in Washington, and to his unremitting energy.

As the spring opened General Howe determined that his first efforts should be to destroy the scanty resources which the Americans had, with infinite

It has been observed * that this latter arrangement would have been extremely dangerous had General Washington commanded a veteran army upon whom he could rely. This however was not the case. Moreover the protection of the British fleet was found at this, as at all other times, to be invaluable. This was the great respect in which the British forces possessed an advantage over the Americans; and so important a circumstance should never be omitted from the account in estimating the merits of the campaign now under review.

The obstructions in the North River having proved insufficient to stop the passage of the British vessels, it was declared by Washington impracticable to hold any longer the position which he had occupied. The primary object of the enemy was to cut off his communication with the eastern colonies, and in case this should not precipitate an engagement, to inclose him completely in his intrenchments on the north of York Island. Measures were now taken for moving the army so as to extend its left towards the White Plains beyond the right of the enemy, while a garrison was left for the protection of Fort Washington and the lines of Haerlem and Kingsbridge, so that the main body of the American army formed a line of intrenched camps extending from twelve to thirteen miles from Valentine's Hill to the White Plains. To this spot the British troops moved with slowness and circumspection. The compactness which they endeavoured to preserve did not however prevent

* Annual Register.

some skirmishes, in which the commander-in-chief expressed his satisfaction with the conduct of his soldiers.

At length, having gradually drawn in his outposts, General Washington took possession of the heights on the east side of the river Brunx in front of the British army. Following his usual plan, he entrenched his camp with remarkable rapidity, and no less by this and by those former arrangements by which he had avoided a disadvantageous engagement, he obtained from the British general and from the contemporary British records the highest praise for his talents as a commander.

On the 28th of October General Howe determined upon an attack, and for this purpose ordered a large body of troops to pass the river and ascend the heights on which the main body of the Americans was posted. This service was performed with that perfect order and determined courage for which the British army are so much distinguished. They ascended the heights under a heavy fire with great gallantry. The American militia were borne away by the steady energy of their attack, but the regulars long sustained it with great bravery. At length they were overpowered by numbers and totally routed. In the evening additional detachments of British troops were ordered to the heights which had been gained in the day, and in this position they lay upon their arms during the night. In the morning it was perceived that the Americans had drawn back their encampment and greatly strengthened their position by additional works. Under these circumstances General Howe determined to defer the attack until the arrival of fresh reinforcements. These reinforcements arrived on

the 30th, and the next morning was fixed for the attack. In the night, however, so heavy a storm occurred as prevented the execution of this purpose. Howe therefore resolved, if possible, to possess himself of the heights behind the American army. On perceiving this, Washington withdrew his forces, on the 1st of November, to the heights of Newcastle (or North Castle), about five miles from the White Plains, and so strongly fortified this excellent position that the British general, despairing of success in any attempt to force it, marched his army away in order to attack Fort Washington; in which, as has been said, a considerable garrison had been left. The design of this army was at once conjectured by the American general. In communicating the information to Congress, he observes:—

“ I cannot indulge the idea that General Howe, supposing him to be going to New York, means to close the campaign and to sit down without attempting something more. I think it highly probable and almost certain that he will make a descent with part of his troops into the Jerseys; and as soon as I am satisfied that the present manœuvre is real, and not a feint, I shall use all the means in my power to forward a part of our force to counteract his designs.

“ I expect the enemy will lead their force against Fort Washington and invest it immediately. From some advice it is an object that will attract their earliest attention.”

He immediately wrote to Mr. Livingston, governor of New Jersey, advising him of the measures which he apprehended, recommending that the militia should be held in constant readiness, and

that the stock and everything which could yield support to the British army should be destroyed, or removed from the coasts where they would be available to the enemy.

While the British forces were marching to Kingsbridge, three ships of war sailed up the Hudson in spite of the American batteries, and of the obstruction which had been sunk in the channel of the river. This circumstance at once convinced Washington that the fort was no longer tenable: he therefore wrote to General Green as follows:—

“If we cannot prevent vessels from passing up, and the enemy are possessed of the surrounding country, what valuable purpose can it answer to attempt to hold a post from which the expected benefit cannot be derived? I am therefore inclined to think it will not be prudent to hazard the men and stores at Fort Washington, but as you are on the spot, I leave it to you to give such orders respecting the evacuation of the place as you may think most advisable.”

General Green, however, placed undue confidence in the strength of the fort, and fearing the effect which the evacuation of so important a post might have on the country, he determined to defend it. Upon General Howe summoning the garrison, Colonel Magaw, the commanding officer, replied that he would defend it to the last extremity. This summons was communicated to General Washington, who had now arrived at Fort Lee. In the dead of night he left Fort Lee in a boat, and made for the besieged post. On his way he met with Generals Green and Putnam, who assured him of the high probability of the miscarriage of

the enemy's attempts, and he returned again to Fort Lee.

On the following morning a desperate attack was made, and in the course of the day, after the most desperate fighting, the outworks were surmounted, and the garrison again summoned to surrender. The ammunition of the Americans was well nigh expended, and the numbers being very unequal, Colonel Magaw surrendered himself and two thousand soldiers in the garrison prisoners of war. It was most unfortunate that this surrender was made so hastily, as during the negotiation a message was received from General Washington that he would in the evening bring troops to his assistance. This offer, however, came too late, and the Americans thus suffered a most discouraging defeat.

The capture of Fort Washington involved in all probability the surrender of Fort Lee. Orders were therefore issued for the removal of the stores and ammunition; but during the execution of this order, Lord Cornwallis crossed the Hudson with a large force. Retreat was now unavoidable. The garrison escaped, but the far greater part of the artillery, stores, and baggage, including three hundred tents, became the prize of the enemy.

These were indeed disastrous and almost insupportable losses. The troops who had been taken were the flower of the American army, and the loss of the stores was most severely felt in an army which was at best but scantily supplied. It is not to be denied that this miscarriage is partly attributable to the indiscretion of General Washington in leaving that to the judgment of a subaltern officer, which he should have decided on his own

authority. It is, however, to his immortal honour that in the midst of his grief at this serious misfortune to his country, he never for one moment exculpated himself on the strength of the opinion that he had given, nor threw the blame of the miscarriage upon the imprudent officer to whom the management of this important affair had been entrusted.

The loss on this occasion was the greatest which had ever befallen the American cause, and was the prelude to almost unexampled sufferings. Of all the æras of Washington's career this was the one which most severely tested his courage and patriotism. If, as has been said, the gods look down with intense interest on the struggles of the great and good against the overwhelming tide of adverse fortune, Washington must now have been the special object of their regard. The prospect around him, and before him, so far as human sagacity can penetrate the future, was gloomy and melancholy in the extreme; just when he needed numbers at his command, and enthusiasm in the minds of all, he saw his army on the eve of dissolution, the time of their enlistment nearly expired, and they themselves, unused to defeat and weary of the service, anxious for nothing but to return to their own homes. Under these depressing circumstances he wrote to General Lee, desiring him to join him with his forces, but unhappily the same wretched system which reflects such eternal disgrace on the American people, frustrated this design. His troops also were daily vanishing on the expiration of the term of enlistment. Such was also the case with the forces under the command of General Mercer which were stationed

about Bergen, and the militia but scantily supplied the places of the deserters. In addition to these adverse circumstances, the inhabitants of the Jerseys were in a great measure indifferent to the cause of their country, and many of the most wealthy testified a desire to return to their old allegiance. So high had this spirit run in the county of Monmouth, that General Washington was obliged to despatch some militia to suppress an insurrection of the royalists there. The danger of the majority of the state deserting the cause of independence when the enemy should come among them, and thus occasioning a disruption in the political union of America, gave him the most serious alarm.

Being unable to resist the crossing of the Passaic, behind which his forces lay, Washington retired before the advancing enemy to Newark, and thence, on the very day on which Lord Cornwallis entered the plain, fled before him to Brunswick. While here, the term of enlistment of the troops who were drawn from Maryland and Jersey expired, and he had the extreme mortification of witnessing the gradual diminution of his feeble army in the very sight of a pursuing enemy. So many indeed of the militia who were engaged to serve till the first of January following, deserted the army that guards were placed on roads to the Delaware, and the ferries over it, in order to apprehend and send back to the camp such soldiers as might be found without a written permission of absence.

Again General Washington urged the governor of New Jersey to call out the strength of the state to his support. But it was not in the power of the governor to afford the required assistance.

Even that part of the country which was well affected to the cause of independence was overawed by the presence of the enemy.

At Brunswick * the troops were continued in motion for the purpose of concealing their weakness, and retarding the advance of the enemy, by creating an opinion that the Americans meditated an attack in turn. From this place the general even moved some men towards them, as if intending offensive operations, and he continued in the town till they were actually in view; but as the advanced guards showed themselves on the opposite side of the bridge, he marched out of Brunswick, and leaving Lord Stirling in Princetown with two brigades from Virginia and Delaware, consisting of twelve hundred men, to watch the enemy, he proceeded himself with the residue of the army to Trenton. He had already directed the boats on the Delaware, from Philadelphia upwards for seventy miles, to be collected and guarded, so that a hope might be reasonably entertained that the progress of the enemy would be stopped at this river, and that in the mean time reinforcements might arrive which would enable him to dispute its passage.

Having with great labour transported the few remaining military stores and baggage over the Delaware, he determined to remain as long as possible with the small force which still adhered to him on the north side of that river.

The army which, under the command of General Washington, was thus pursued through the Jerseys, was aided by no other cavalry than a small

* Judge Marshall's Life of Washington.

corps of badly mounted Connecticut militia, commanded by Major Sheldon, and was almost equally destitute of artillery. Its numbers at no time during the retreat exceeded four thousand, and was now reduced to less than three thousand men, of whom not quite one thousand were militia belonging to the State of New Jersey, and even of his regulars there were many whose terms of service were about to expire.

Nor did his weakness in point of numbers constitute the only embarrassment of his situation. His regulars were badly armed, worse clad, and almost without tents, blankets, or utensils for dressing their provisions. They were composed chiefly of the garrison drawn from Fort Lee, and had been obliged to evacuate that place with too much precipitation to bring with them even those few articles for their comfort and accommodation with which they had been furnished. He found himself at the head of this small band, dispirited by their losses and fatigues, retreating almost naked and bare-footed in the cold of November and December before a numerous, well-appointed, and victorious army, through a desponding country, much more disposed to secure safety by submission than to seek it by manly resistance. Some idea may be formed of the state of the troops from the tradition that is still current in America, and doubtless authentic, that their march could actually be traced by the blood which their lacerated feet left upon the soil.

In this crisis of American affairs, a proclamation was issued by Lord and General Howe as commissioners appointed on the part of the crown for restoring peace to America, commanding all per-

sons assembled in arms against his Majesty's government to disband and return to their homes: and all civil officers to desist from their treasonable practices and relinquish their usurped authority. A full pardon was also offered to every person who would within sixty days appear before certain civil or military officers of the crown, and claim the benefit of that proclamation, and at the same time testify his obedience to the laws by subscribing a declaration of his submission to the royal authority. Copies of this proclamation were immediately dispersed through the country, after which numbers flocked in daily for the purpose of making their peace, and obtaining protection.

If any crisis can be imagined at which it is excusable for firmness and patriotism to sink under insupportable adversity, this, in the history of General Washington, would be that crisis. A scene of more unmitigated and hopeless suffering it is impossible to conceive. But in the midst of universal depression and darkness Washington stood concentrating upon himself the intense gaze of the civilised world,—in dignified distress, erect, unconquered and unconquerable. Like a second Cato, he stood alone, guarding the precious germ of the freedom of generations, and solemnly devoted to an eternal war with its invaders. With the philosophic hero of antiquity, he was resolved to deserve the success which “ ’tis not in mortals to command,” and with him he may share the godlike tribute of the poet,

“ *Victrix causa diis placuit, sed victa Catoni!* ”

He continually exhibited himself to the army with a serene and unembarrassed countenance, and alike by his exhortations and his example animated

them to hope for more auspicious events, and not to relax their energies when their country most required them. It is impossible to doubt that to the undisturbed steadiness of Washington's mind under these misfortunes, and to the influence exerted on the minds of others, and particularly of the Congress, by the majesty of his demeanour, America mainly owes her independence.

Having removed his baggage and stores to the south side of the Delaware, and sent a detachment of twelve hundred men to Princeton, in order to reanimate the people of Jersey by an appearance of aggression, he waited patiently for reinforcements. This moment of inaction he embraced to lay before Congress his reiterated remonstrances against the fatal system of short enlistments. He hoped that experience, by its severe chastisement, would produce the conviction upon that body which his arguments and persuasion had not fully effected.

He urged Congress to establish corps of cavalry, artillerists, and engineers; and pressed upon them the necessity of establishing additional regiments of infantry. He knew that objections to these measures would arise on account of the expense, and from the consideration that the old battalions were not yet filled: these he obviated by observing thus:—

“More men would in this way on the whole be raised, and our funds are not the only object now to be taken into consideration. We find,” he added, “that the enemy are daily gathering strength from the disaffected. This strength, like a snow-ball by rolling, will increase, unless some means can be devised to check effectually the progress of the enemy's arms. Militia may possibly do it for

a little while ; but in a little also the militia of these states, which have frequently been called upon, will not turn out at call ; or, if they do, it will be with so much reluctance and sloth as to amount to the same thing : instance New Jersey !—witness Pennsylvania ! Could anything but the river Delaware have saved Philadelphia ? Could anything (the exigency of the case may justify it) be more destructive to the recruiting service than giving ten dollars bounty for six weeks' service of the militia, who come in you cannot tell how, go you cannot tell when, and act you cannot tell where ?—consume your provisions, exhaust your stores, and leave you at last at a critical moment. These are the men I am to depend upon ten days hence. This is the basis on which your cause will, and must for ever depend, till you get a large standing army sufficient of itself to oppose the enemy."

With deference he suggested to Congress the expediency of enlarging his own powers, that he might execute important measures without consulting them, and possibly, by delay, missing the favourable moment of action :—

" It may be said," he observes, " that this is an application for powers too dangerous to be entrusted. I can only add, that desperate diseases require desperate remedies ; and with truth declare that I have no lust after power, but wish with as much fervency as any man upon the wide extended continent, for an opportunity of turning the sword into a ploughshare. But my feelings as an officer and a man have been such as to force me to say, that no person ever had a greater choice of difficulties to contend with than I have."

Having recommended sundry other measures,

and mentioned several arrangements which he had adopted beyond the spirit of his commission, he concluded with the following observations:—

“ It may be thought that I am going a good deal out of the line of my duty to adopt these measures or to advise thus freely. A character to lose, an estate to forfeit, the inestimable blessings of liberty at stake, and a life devoted, must be my apology.”

In Philadelphia almost all who were capable of bearing arms had associated themselves for the defence of their country, and fifteen hundred of these now marched to reinforce the commander-in-chief; with this, and other accessions, amounting in all to about two thousand men, General Washington crossed the Delaware, secured all the boats, broke down all the bridges, and guarded all the ferries; at the same time employing galleys to keep a continual look out on the enemy's movements. Lines of defence were drawn to a considerable extent, and every precaution taken to prevent what Washington conjectured to be the design of the enemy, viz., the crossing of the Delaware and the taking of the city of Philadelphia.

General Lee had answered but slowly to the urgent requests of the commander-in-chief to join his forces to the main army. While slowly and reluctantly approaching through Morris County, he imprudently slept at a house three miles from his troops, and under a scanty guard. Information of this circumstance was communicated to Colonel Harcourt, who was at no great distance observing his movements; and, with a body of cavalry, he formed and executed the design of seizing him and carrying him off a prisoner to the British army. The loss of General Lee was severely felt through-

out America, and by none more than by General Washington. Sullivan, upon whom the command of his army devolved upon his removal, hastened to join the commander-in-chief, whose forces were augmented by this accession to nearly seven thousand men. He also received a still further reinforcement from the northern army under General Gates. Finding his numbers sufficiently increased to allow of active operations, he conceived a scheme by which he might relieve the desponding spirits of his countrymen by a single masterly stroke. He no sooner perceived the scattered position of the British posts on the Delaware than he resolved upon attacking them all simultaneously.

For this purpose the night of the 25th of December was chosen. About two thousand four hundred men, under the immediate command of General Washington, were ordered to cross the Delaware about nine miles above Trenton, to attack that post. General Irvine was directed to cross with his division at Trenton ferry, and secure the bridge below the town, so as to obstruct the retreat of the enemy in that direction. General Cadwallader received orders to cross at Bristol ferry, and assault the post at Burlington. The weather was intensely cold, and so much ice was in the rivers that Generals Irvine and Cadwallader found it impossible to cross with the artillery, and the execution of the plan was reserved for General Washington. The delay incurred in crossing obliged the general to give up the hope of surprising the post at Trenton by night. He therefore marched his little army to Trenton by two roads, called the River and the Pennington Roads, and by each of which the distance was about nine miles.

He himself took the latter route, and arrived at the British outposts at Trenton at eight o'clock in the morning. He assumed that the two divisions would perform the march in about the same time, and therefore at once drove in the picquet guard, and three minutes afterwards had the satisfaction of hearing the fire of his other division, who were performing the same service on the River Road.

Colonel Rawle, a very gallant British officer, immediately drew out his forces in as much order as possible to repel the assailants, but fell mortally wounded in the commencement of the action. His troops immediately filed off to the Princeton road, which, when Washington perceived, he threw a detachment in their front which intercepted them. Finding themselves surrounded, and their artillery seized, they laid down their arms and surrendered, to the number of one thousand. Had not the extreme severity of the weather forbidden the other divisions to cross the Delaware, the result of this enterprising stroke would doubtless have been to sweep away the British from all their posts on the Delaware, and thus establish a firm footing in the Jerseys. As it was, the general wisely forbore all further aggression, and re-crossed the Delaware with his prisoners, six pieces of artillery, a thousand stand of arms, and some valuable military stores.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Further Successes of General Washington—Sufferings of his Army—Proclamation of Howe—Acts of the British Parliament—Of Mr. Fox and Lord Chatham—Complaints of Washington to Congress—Destruction of the American Stores at Peek's Kill and Danbury.

THE astonishment of the British general at this display of valour and enterprise in an army which, in the midst of indigence and suffering, had been for weeks retiring, or rather flying before his superior force, may be readily imagined. It taught him a useful lesson. He found that nothing short of absolute extermination would make them cease to be dangerous to him and hostile to the government which he represented. Though in the depth of a severe winter, he found it necessary to recommence active operations, and Lord Cornwallis, who had retired to New York on his return to England, was obliged to hasten back to the Jerseys to recover the ground which, in one inactive moment, the indomitable energy of Washington had wrested from their possession.

After two days of repose from the labours and sufferings of the expedition against the troops at Trenton, Washington received some reinforcements of Pennsylvania militia, and again found himself in a condition to attempt some further enterprise.

His resolution now was to recover as much as possible of the territory which the British had overrun. For this purpose, having despatched Generals Heath and Maxwell to more remote positions, he himself again crossed the Delaware with his continental regiments, and took post at Trenton.

Generals Mifflin and Cadwallader were ordered to march up and join the commander-in-chief on the 1st of January, 1777, and his force was thus increased to five thousand men. On the following day Lord Cornwallis appeared with a superior force, and Washington drew up his troops behind Assumpinck Creek, a narrow stream which runs through the town of Trenton. This his lordship attempted to cross at several places, but the vigilance of the guard frustrated his attempt, and for that day his operations were suspended. In the evening General Washington suggested to a council of war the extremely critical position of his army, and the ruin which would ensue to the interests of America should the enemy gain the advantage. He urged that they should silently quit their present position and gain the rear of the enemy at Princeton. This advice met with general concurrence, and notwithstanding the proximity of the two armies, the watch fires were renewed, and at one o'clock in the morning the whole force of Washington removed unperceived and reached the town of Princeton. Here three British regiments had encamped * the preceding night, two of which commenced their march early in the morning to join the rear of their army at Maidenhead. About sunrise they fell in with the van of the Americans,

* Judge Marshall's Life of Washington.

conducted by General Mercer, and a very sharp action ensued; which, however, was not of very long duration. The militia, of which the advanced army was principally composed, and the few regulars attached to them, were not strong enough to maintain their ground. General Mercer was mortally wounded while gallantly exerting himself to rally his broken troops, and the van was entirely routed. But the fortune of the day was soon changed. The main body of the army, led by General Washington in person, followed close in the rear, and attacked the enemy with great spirit. Persuaded that defeat would irretrievably ruin the affairs of America, he advanced in the very front of danger, and exposed himself to the hottest fire of the enemy. He was also well supported by those troops who had a few days before saved their country at Trenton; so that the British in turn were compelled to give way. Their line was broken and the two regiments separated from each other. Colonel Mawhood, who commanded that in front, forced his way through a part of the American troops and reached Maidenhead. The fifty-fifth regiment, which was in the rear, retreated by the way of Hillsborough to Brunswick. The vicinity of the British forces at Maidenhead secured Colonel Mawhood from being pursued, and General Washington pressed forward to Princeton. The regiment remaining in that place saved itself without having sustained much loss, by a precipitate retreat to Brunswick.

In this action upwards of one hundred of the enemy were killed on the spot, and nearly three hundred were taken prisoners. The loss of the Americans in killed was somewhat less, but in this

number was included General Mercer, a valuable officer from Virginia, who had served with the commander-in-chief in the war against the French and Indians, which terminated in 1763, and was greatly esteemed by him. Colonels Haslett and Potter, two brave and excellent officers from Delaware and Pennsylvania, Captain Neal of the artillery, Captain Fleming, who on that day commanded the seventh Virginia regiment, and five other valuable officers were also amongst the slain.

On the appearance of day-light Lord Cornwallis discovered that the American army had moved off in the night, and immediately conceived the whole plan which had been formed by Washington. He was under extreme apprehensions for Brunswick, where magazines of great value had been collected, and where it has been understood the military chest, containing about seventy thousand pounds, was deposited. Breaking up his camp he commenced a rapid march to that place, in order to afford it protection, and was close on the rear of the American army before they could leave Princeton.

General Washington now again found himself in a very perilous situation. His small army was exhausted with extreme fatigue. His troops had been without sleep all of them one night, and some of them two. They were without blankets, many of them barefooted, and otherwise very thinly clad. He was closely pursued by an enemy very much superior in point of numbers, well clothed, not harassed by want of sleep, and who must necessarily come up with him before he could accomplish his designs on Brunswick, if any opposition should there be offered to him. Under these circumstances he

very wisely determined to abandon the remaining part of his original plan, and having broken down the bridges over Hillstone Creek, between Princeton and Brunswick, he took the road leading up the country to Pluckemin, where his army were permitted to refresh themselves and take that rest which they so greatly required. Lord Cornwallis continued his march to Brunswick, which he reached that night. General Mathews commanded at that place, and while he paraded his troops for defence against the American general whom he expected, he used the utmost industry in guarding against the worst by removing the military stores to a place of greater safety.

The sufferings of the American army had been so great from the severity of the season and the very active service in which they had been engaged, their complaints, especially on the part of the militia, were so loud, their numbers were reducing so fast by returning home and by sickness, that General Washington found it impracticable to prosecute farther offensive operations, and deemed it absolutely necessary to retire to Morristown, in order to put his men under cover and to give them some repose.

The successful and brilliant enterprises which closed this campaign at once raised the spirits and stimulated the courage of the Americans, and impressed the mind of the British general with the necessity of the utmost circumspection and with a high respect for the military talents of General Washington. It was hoped that their effect would be to draw to the field so large a force as would enable the general to drive the enemy out of New Jersey, and to confine them in New

York. This expectation was however disappointed. In spite of the exertions of the most influential officers who were despatched into their different states for the purpose of recruiting, the work proceeded but slowly. One important improvement however had followed from Washington's remonstrances. Such as were enlisted were engaged for three years, and a bounty of one hundred acres of land was offered to such as would engage themselves till the close of the war. In the earlier part of the year 1777 the American force in camp at Morristown only amounted to fifteen hundred men; yet with these inconsiderable numbers, and with the occasional assistance of the New Jersey militia, he so disposed his posts as to conceal his weakness from the enemy, and to keep them in check at Brunswick for several weeks. At this period the difficulties under which he had so long laboured for want of stores were alleviated by the arrival of upwards of twenty thousand muskets, and a thousand barrels of powder, which had been procured in France and Holland by the agency of the celebrated dramatist Carron de Beaumarchais.

In consequence of the ravages of the small pox in the army, General Washington took the opportunity of having his soldiers inoculated during this interval of inactivity, and all recruits who joined the army underwent the same operation. The military movements during this early period of the year were confined to expeditions for the purpose of removing all wagons, horses, and cattle from the neighbourhood of the enemy's lines.

The repeated remonstrances of the commander-in-chief at length began to operate upon Congress: and in conformity with them, the corps of artillerists

was increased to three regiments; a resolution passed the Congress for raising three thousand cavalry, and for the establishment of a corps of engineers. Still the conflicting powers of Congress, and of the separate states rendered the arrangement of the army exceedingly difficult, and gave rise to much insubordination. Another cause of vexation to General Washington was found in the severe treatment of the American prisoners in the possession of the British. He remonstrated upon the subject with General Howe, but only received an insolent reply, that they would receive no more than their due if they were all summarily hanged as rebels. Upon this, Washington assured him in a dignified answer that his conduct to the British prisoners would be regulated by that which was shown towards his countrymen,—a threat which the humanity of his heart forbade him to execute.

A similar spirit to that manifested by the British general, was also conspicuous in the conduct of the home government. On the 7th of February 1777, a bill was presented to the house of commons "to empower his Majesty to secure and detain persons charged with, or suspected of the crime of high treason, committed in North America, or on the high seas, or of the crime of piracy." This bill was met by all the friends of liberty with the most indignant opposition. By Mr. Fox, in particular, it was attacked with great power. In this proposition on the part of ministers, he saw distinctly the working of sentiments opposed not to American liberty in particular, but to universal liberty, and he exposed its flagrant character and horrible tendency with a degree of vehemence inspired less by sympathy with the Americans,

than by regard for the dearest interests of human society at large.

“This plan,” said he, “has long been visible, and however covertly hid, or artfully held back, is uniformly adopted, and steadily pursued. It is nothing less than robbing America of her franchises as a previous step to introducing the same system of government into this country, and, in fine, of spreading arbitrary dominion over all the territories of the British crown.”

After expressing with that overwhelming power of language for which he was so distinguished, his astonishment at the insolence and audacity of ministers in proposing such a measure as the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, he concluded in nearly the following words:—

“Weakness, cruelty, suspicion, and credulity are almost always inseparable. Ministers are credulous in the extreme, because they are fearful, and they are fearful from a consciousness of their crimes. Suspicions however ill founded upon tales however improbable, are received by them as facts not to be controverted. I am no longer surprised at anything. The tone of the minister has become firm, loud, and decisive. He has already assured us in this house that he has nearly subdued America, and by what we are able to collect from this bill, we may presume he means to extend his conquests nearer home.”

Again on the 30th of May, an attempt was made without success, by the Earl of Chatham, to close the disastrous war now waging with America. On that day he moved according to notice:—

“That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, most dutifully representing to his royal

wisdom, that this house is deeply penetrated with the view of impending ruin to this kingdom, from the continuation of an unnatural war against the British colonies in America; and most humbly to advise his Majesty to take the most speedy and effectual measures for putting a stop to such fatal hostilities upon the only just and solid foundation, namely, the removal of accumulated grievances; and to assure his Majesty, that this house will enter upon this great and necessary work with cheerfulness and despatch, in order to open to his Majesty the only means of regaining the affection of the British colonies, and of securing to Great Britain the commercial advantages of those invaluable possessions: fully persuaded, that to heal and redress will be more congenial to the goodness and magnanimity of his Majesty, and more prevalent over the hearts of generous and free-born subjects, than the rigours of chastisement, and horrors of civil war, which hitherto have served only to sharpen resentments, and consolidate union, and, if continued, must end finally in dissolving all ties between Great Britain and the colonies."

In advocating this motion, he offered a most eloquent exposition of the past history, and probable effects of the war:—

"In explaining," said he, "the grounds of the motion I am about to make, it is indispensably necessary that I should tell your lordships what has caused the evils with which we are at present threatened. My lords, you voted away the property of the Americans without their consent; when they complained, you would not hear their complaints; you called them factious, seditious, and rebellious. You quarrelled with your subjects on

the other side of the Atlantic about a paltry tax upon tea; you have spent many millions in support of this tax. The war, my lords, is got to a height no man could foresee; to a height which now threatens ruin and destruction to this country. America is lost. I fear, England is undone. What have you done, my lords? You have rendered Britain a dependent state; dependent on the precarious friendship, or more precarious neutrality of France. What did you do? You condemned a whole province without hearing, without even demanding satisfaction for the injury you sustained. You proscribed them; you shut up their ports and harbours; you robbed them of their chartered rights; you deprived them of their most valuable privileges; of the inalienable birth-right of an Englishman, the trial by jury; the trial of the vicinage; of judges acquainted with the parties, the offence, the provocation, and the measure of punishment. What was the consequence? Three millions of people refused to be bound by your arbitrary edicts—I beg your lordships' pardon, ministers were mistaken; it was Englishmen that were to be bound and enslaved. My lords, they refused it. The skill and bravery of your generals, the prowess of your troops, the strength and pride of this once powerful country, your navy, was found insufficient. What were you obliged to do? You could not procure men at home; Englishmen do not like to enslave Englishmen, nor trample on the rights of their fellow-subjects. What did your lordships do? You hired twenty-thousand German boors; your ministers, I say, hired them, to cut the throats of your unoffending colonists.

“ Those colonists are now called rebels ; they are stigmatised with every base and abusive epithet in the English language. Yet, my lords, I remember, when this country was waging war with the united powers of France and Spain ; when there was a rebellion, a Scotch rebellion, within this land ; I remember, when our fleets were useless, our armies unsuccessful, that these men, now described as the blackest and basest of all rebels, nay more, that very colony which has been represented as the hot-bed of sedition and treason,—that colony, against which the keenest lightnings of government are denounced, and have been directed ; I remember, I say, my lords, this very colony sending forth four regiments of undisciplined militia, which gave the first check to France in her proud career, and erected the standard of conquest on the walls of Louisburg. But we need not point out particular facts, in proof of the bravery, the zeal, the duty, and affection of this people ; the annals of the last war will tell such of your lordships, as are not old enough to remember, how they fought, and how they bled ; they will tell you how generously they contributed, how like loving brethren they shared the common burden and the danger. These, my lords, are the unhappy men you have cruelly devoted to destruction ; whose towns you would raze, whose commerce you would annihilate, whose liberties you would destroy by the sword, whose properties you would confiscate, and whose persons you would enslave ; these are the people whom your ministers would extirpate. What has been the system pursued by administration, and what have been the measures taken for carrying it into execution ? Your system has been a government erected on the ruins of the

constitution, and founded in conquest, and you have swept all Germany of its refuse as its means. There is not a petty, insignificant prince, whom you have not solicited for aid. You are become the suitors at every German court, and you have your ministers enrolled in the German chancery, as the contracting parties in behalf of this once great and glorious country. The laurels of Britain are faded, her arms are disgraced, her negotiations are spurned at, and her councils fallen into contempt. My lords, you have vainly tried to conquer America, by the aid of German mercenaries, by the arms of twenty thousand undisciplined German boors, gleaned and collected from every obscure corner of the country; you have subsidised their masters; you have lavished the public treasures on them; and what have you effected? Nothing, but forcing the colonies to declare themselves independent states. You have roused them, my lords, to act with vigour and resolution; you have united and combined them; you have by this unnatural act cemented them, and given them but one soul. Their breasts are filled with indignation; they are fired with just resentments; they burn with ardour to avenge their injuries, and retaliate with interest on their cruel and merciless oppressors; yes, my lords, I say, three millions of freemen will never submit to twenty thousand mercenaries. No, my lords, the idea is preposterous; the attempt is absurd; as well might I expect to conquer them with this crutch, as to suppose that America will ever submit to so contemptible a force. I would recommend peace to your lordships, at all events; the longer the unhappy contest is continued, the more difficult it

will be to conciliate, and the less able we shall be to prosecute with vigour or effect, or accommodate with honour or advantage. Ministers, as they have blundered from the beginning, are led into a fatal error respecting our natural enemies, the French. They imagine that nothing is to be dreaded from that quarter, because France has not interfered directly in favour of America. But, my lords, do ministers, when they build such mighty things on this circumstance, recollect, that they argue as if France were mad? Would they have France run the risk, hazard, and expense of a war, when Britain is doing all for France she can possibly wish or desire? It was a gross misconception to suppose, that France ever thought a single minute about giving a direct aid to the colonies: she never meant, my lords, to interrupt this country in its wild career, or stand between it and its colonies. No, my lords, she has taken care from her conduct, to feed and nourish the mad notions of conquest and dominion which have unfortunately prevailed within these walls. She has been equally sedulous to give just that degree of countenance and protection which have hitherto served to keep the civil war alive, so as to baffle your designs, and to waste your strength. This cruel and unnatural war, my lords, I dread, will be a fatal war; you have proscribed your own children; you have turned a deaf ear to their dutiful petitions, their fervent entreaties; and have interpreted their honest constitutional remonstrances into treason and rebellion. You have, my lords, lost America; you have poured the riches of America into the lap of the House of Bourbon. Will France forget her own interest so much as to think of war? To

effect what, my lords? What this country is effecting at the rate of twenty millions per annum. France, my lords, knows her own interest better. France is filling her arsenals with naval stores; she is disposing of her manufactures; she is accumulating in her store-houses the produce of America; she is thereby preparing for war; she is cultivating and extending her commerce, and wisely opening new sources of internal wealth, and external strength, while we continue daily to waste our own strength; while our commerce languishes, and while our specie leaves the kingdom to purchase those commodities, which, besides the common advantages derived from them in a commercial view, were all received in exchange for our own manufactures. We have, my lords, tried hitherto to no purpose. Is there the most distant rational prospect that affairs will wear a better face at the end of this year than they did the last? We have exerted our utmost strength to little or no purpose. We have talked of conquering America; have we done it? No, my lords, we have nothing to boast of but a few trifling advantages, which, when we consider the price paid for them, and the circumstances which attended the obtaining them, wear, in fact, every solid appearance of defeat. We continue to send troops, and have voted millions; and what, my lords, are we told? That our army, after such enormous supplies, will be just equal to what it was last year, when it effected nothing or next to nothing."

His lordship endeavoured to show the absurdity of relying longer on the force of arms, and very pathetically pressed the necessity of a speedy conciliation. He represented Great Britain as on the

brink of a precipice, on the very verge of destruction ; and desired their lordships to snatch the present moment, as probably the last in which they would have the opportunity of procuring the national salvation. A few weeks, nay, a single day's delay, might possibly be too late.

“ War,” says his lordship, “ has been tried ; let us, my lords, see what conciliation will do ; let us recollect our critical situation ; let us consider, should we persevere in the same wild, ruinous, and oppressive system, the inevitable alternatives with which we are surrounded on either hand. Should we lose America, America will be added in fact to the French empire. Should we prove successful in the struggle, debilitated, exhausted, and impoverished as we must be, we shall in that event have conquered America for France. If, not waiting for either of those events, France should change her present system, which I can hardly think she will, except by some very unexpected change in her councils, then America, as a matter of course, will be lost for ever to this country. Should this latter be the case, and should she make a public avowal of her sentiments, by supporting the cause of America ; though we had but five ships of war in the world, I should instantly be for declaring war against her, as the only reparation that could possibly satisfy the wounded honour of a great nation.”

While thus the most strenuous efforts of genius and patriotism failed to cure the infatuation of the British ministry, the war was proceeding with increasing vigour in America ; small parties of militia scoured the country in all directions, seized

upon any of the British who had separated themselves from their corps, and, in some skirmishes, behaved with great courage and skill. These little successes induced General Howe to change his plan of operation. He determined to strengthen himself by contracting his posts. The different positions which he had previously taken for the purpose of covering and retaining possession of the country were all, except two, abandoned; and the whole British force in the Jerseys was concentrated at Brunswick and at Amboy, at the mouth of the Raritan. These posts were judiciously selected to enable him both to pass by land to Philadelphia, and to keep up his communications with New York. Even this alteration, however, was not effected without loss. General Maxwell, with a corps of Jersey militia, had been ordered to the neighbourhood of Elizabeth Town, and, on the British evacuating that place, he made an attack on their rear in which about seventy prisoners and a part of their baggage were taken. By this movement of the British general, almost the whole state of the Jerseys may be considered as once more added to the Union, and freed from the power of the enemy. Almost every day produced some skirmish which increased the confidence of the Americans, and the caution of General Howe. Both these effects, however, are in a great measure to be traced to ignorance respecting the real force of General Washington; and, perhaps, few things in the war are more remarkable than the invariable concealment of his condition from the enemy. Had General Howe been aware of the smallness of the American forces, nothing could have saved them from total defeat.

Some idea may be formed of the condition in which General Washington now found himself, from the following passages in his correspondence. On the 23rd of February 1777, he thus writes to Congress from head-quarters :—

“Our delicate and truly critical situation for want of a sufficient force to oppose the enemy, who are now ready, and will before many days elapse take the field, induced me to expect that the troops raising in the southern states, and intended for this army, would march in companies or half companies as they were made up, without waiting for their regiments to be complete. Policy strongly suggested the propriety of the measure, and I requested it, but to my great anxiety and surprise I am told that this line of conduct is totally neglected, though a great number of recruits are actually engaged ; I must entreat Congress to interpose again with their most pressing application, and command that this expedient may be adopted without a moment's delay. No injury can result from it, because a sufficient number of proper officers can and must be left to recruit the corps to their full complement.

“Nor will my fears respecting the state of our arms allow me to be silent on that head. Let the states be urged to send their men equipped with them, and every other necessary if possible : I know not what supplies may be in store elsewhere, or in the power of Congress, but they must not depend upon their being furnished here with any, or but with very few :—no human prudence or precaution could secure but a small part of those belonging to the public, and in the hands of the soldiery, from being embezzled and carried off

when their time of service expired, nor can the same abuses be restrained in the militia.

“I have the honour to be, &c. &c.

“GEORGE WASHINGTON.”

On the 28th of the same month he again wrote to Congress as follows:—

“I was in hopes that by the time the militia who are now in service would be discharged we should have a considerable number of the new levies in the field, but though I have reports from all quarters of the great success of recruiting, I cannot get a man of them into the service. General Johnson's militia all go the 5th of March (many are gone already), and General Lincoln's on the 15th. These two bodies form so considerable a part of our force, that, unless they are replaced, I shall be left in a manner destitute, for I have no great hopes of seeing an equal number of continental troops by that time.

“I have wrote to Pennsylvania to endeavour to get a reinforcement of militia from thence, and I am told the militia from the counties of Baltimore, Hartford, and Cecil in Maryland, are on their march, but, as I have it not from any authority, I know not when to expect them, or in what numbers. They are about passing a militia law in this state, which may perhaps have some effect, but at present they are under no regulation at all.”

Again, in a letter to Governor Trumbull, dated March 6th, he says:—

“I tell you in confidence, that after the 15th of this month, when the time of General Lincoln's militia expires, I shall be left with the remains of

five Virginian regiments, not amounting to more than as many hundred men, and parts of two or three other continental battalions all very weak. The remainder of the army will be composed of militia from this state and Pennsylvania, on whom little dependence can be put, as they come and go when they please. The enemy must be ignorant of our numbers and situation, or they would never suffer us to remain unmolested: and I almost tax myself with imprudence in committing the secret to paper; not that I distrust you, of whose inviolable attachment I have had so many proofs, but for fear the letter should fall into other hands than those for which it is intended."

Notwithstanding the almost incredible weakness of the American forces General Washington engaged in frequent skirmishes, in some of which he gained decisive advantages over the numerous foraging parties of the British, one of the most signal of which occurred at the very time at which the foregoing statements were made.

As the usual season for active operations approached the solicitude of the commander-in-chief was greatly augmented by the slowness with which the army increased. The division of that power amidst numerous subordinate members, which, for the successful prosecution of war, must be concentrated in one supreme and responsible head, was felt as almost a fatal disadvantage; and the advances which were made were evidently owing to the universal confidence placed in Washington, and to his unremitting energy.

As the spring opened General Howe determined that his first efforts should be to destroy the scanty resources which the Americans had, with infinite

labour, accumulated for the ensuing campaign. One of the principal depositories of the stores was at Peek's Kill, a place which, from its natural situation, was both well defended and admirably calculated to receive and dispense supplies. Upon this place the Americans had fixed as one of their chief depôts, and had accumulated there a very large collection of the necessaries of war.

The strength of this post*, like that of all others depending for defence on militia, was subject to great fluctuation. At some times it had amounted to three or four thousand men, and at other times it was reduced to as many hundreds. General Howe had understood it to be a much more considerable depôt of stores than it really was; and as soon as the ice was out of the river took advantage of the occasional weakness of General Macdougall, who commanded there, to plan an expedition against it, for the purpose of either destroying or bringing away the stores.

On the 23rd of March, Colonel Bird was detached up the river on this service, with about five hundred men, under convoy of a frigate and some armed vessels. General Macdougall, whose numbers at that time did not exceed two hundred and fifty men, received timely notice of his approach, and exerted himself for the removal of the stores into the strong country in his rear. Before this could be effected the enemy appeared, and finding himself unable to oppose them he set fire to the remaining magazines, and to the barracks, and retired about two miles into the strong grounds on the back of Peek's Kill. The conflagration was

* Judge Marshall's Life of Washington.

completed by the enemy, who then returned to New York. During their short stay a piquet guard was attacked by Colonel Willet and driven in with the loss of a few men; a circumstance believed by General Macdougall to have hastened the re-embarkation of the detachment. The quantity of stores in the magazines was not so considerable as had been expected, and consequently the injury done in this expedition was much less than had been counted on by the British general when he directed it. A reinforcement of about two thousand militia had been ordered from Connecticut, and not long after the destruction of Peek's Kill about half that number actually arrived.

At Danbury, on the western frontier of Connecticut, not far from the high lands of New York, military stores to a considerable amount had likewise been deposited. Although this place was not more than twenty miles from the Sound, yet the intervening country was so rough, the troops from the eastward were so frequently passing through the town, and the zeal of the neighbouring militia so much relied on, that the magazines collected were believed to be secure against any sudden attack from the enemy. In addition to the means of defence which have been stated, General Washington had ordered as many of the draughts made by the states of Connecticut to fill up the continental regiments as the place was capable of accommodating, to be assembled there, for the double purpose of being inoculated and of furnishing a guard to the stores; but under this order only fifty men had been collected. Against Danbury, however, an expedition was projected; and two thousand men, under the command of Governor Tryon,

major-general of the provincials in the British service, assisted by Brigadiers Agnew and Sir William Erskine, were employed in it.

On the 25th of April the fleet appeared off the coast of Connecticut, and in the evening landed the troops without opposition at Campo, between Fairfield and Norwalk. General Sullivan, who was then in that part of the country, immediately despatched expresses to alarm and call out the militia. In the meantime the enemy proceeded almost undisturbed to Danbury, which they reached about ten o'clock next day; and which place, with the magazines it contained, they set on fire and destroyed. Colonel Huntingdon, who had occupied the town with one hundred and fifty militia and continental troops, retired at their approach to a neighbouring height, where he waited the reinforcements which were assembling from the country. General Arnold was also in the neighbourhood superintending the recruiting service. He joined General Sullivan at Reading, where that officer had collected about five hundred militia. General Wooster, who had resigned his commission in the continental service, and been appointed major-general of the militia of Connecticut, fell in with them at the same place, and they proceeded that night through a heavy rain to Bethel, about eight miles from Danbury. Here they halted, and having heard next morning that the enemy, after destroying the town and magazines, were returning, they divided their troops; and General Wooster, with about three hundred men, fell on their rear, while Arnold, with about five hundred, crossing the country took post in their front at Ridgefield. Wooster came up with them at about

eleven in the morning, attacked their rear with great gallantry, and a sharp skirmish ensued, in which he was mortally wounded and the troops forced to give way *. The enemy then proceeded to Ridgefield where they found Arnold, who had only arrived about an hour before them, already entrenched on a strong piece of ground, and prepared to dispute their passage. A warm skirmish ensued, which continued nearly an hour, when Arnold was compelled to give way; and, being unable to rally his men, retreated to Pangatuck, about three miles east of Norwalk. The enemy remained that night at Ridgefield, which they also set on fire, and by break of day next morning resumed their march. They were met about eleven in the morning by Arnold, whose numbers increased during the day to something more than one thousand men, among whom were some continental artillery and infantry, and a continual skirmishing was kept up till five in the afternoon, when the enemy reached a hill near their ships where they made a stand. Here the Americans charged them with intrepidity, but were repulsed and broken. Availing themselves of this circumstance the enemy immediately re-embarked and returned to New York.

* Congress voted a monument to his memory.

CHAPTER XIX.

Effects of the British Successes on the Minds of the Americans—Reprisals—Removal of the British Force to Staten Island, and thence to the Chesapeake—Howe defeats the Americans on the Banks of the Brandywine, and enters Philadelphia in triumph—Obstruction of Navigation in the Delaware—Attack on the British Camp—Destruction of the American Forts on Mud Island and Red Bank—The American Army retires into Winter Quarters.

THE loss sustained by the Americans at Peek's Kill and Danbury was such, as at their best estate they would have been ill able to afford. In their present destitute condition few injuries could have been more severely felt. Besides large quantities of provisions and stores which were destroyed at Danbury, they were deprived of one article which it was utterly impossible to replace. This was their tents, which had been provided to the number of upwards of a thousand, against the ensuing campaign. One indirect advantage however accrued to the Americans from this disaster. The apparent wantonness with which houses and property had been destroyed exasperated the people to the utmost, and quenched in the bosoms of such as were undecided the last sparks of royalism. With regard to the failure of the attempts of the enemy to entice or awe the inhabitants into a union with them, General Washington observes in a letter to Governor Trumbull :—

“From these events we derive the consolation of knowing that the sentiments of the people are still powerfully directed to liberty, and that no impression of the enemy, however sudden and unexpected, will pass with impunity.”

It was not long before an opportunity presented itself for retaliating these injuries. It was ascertained that the British had been for some time collecting large quantities of stores and provisions on the east end of Long Island. The station itself was but indifferently guarded, but the General imagined that the frequent passing and repassing of the British cruisers would operate effectually to forbid the approach of the enemy. General Parsons, however, who commanded at Newhaven, formed the design of gaining possession of these stores, and entrusted the conduct of the enterprise to Colonel Meigs, an officer of great bravery and enterprise. Meigs accordingly embarked with two hundred and seventy men, with one hundred and thirty of whom he crossed the Sound from Guildford, under convoy of two armed sloops, and landed at the northern division of the island near Southold. Here information was received that the stores had not been removed from Sagg Harbour, and that but a small guard was left there for their defence. They immediately conveyed their boats across the land, a distance of fifteen miles, and re-embarked for a point four miles distant from Sagg Harbour. The latter place they surprised in the night, and carried at the point of the bayonet. An armed schooner, together with the vessels laden with forage which it was designed to protect, were seized, set on fire, and entirely consumed. Six of the enemy were killed, and ninety taken prisoners ;

and the object of the expedition having been thus completely effected, Colonel Meigs returned to Guildford with his prisoners, and without the loss of a single man. The most remarkable fact, however, connected with this service was stated in the letter of General Parsons to Congress, relating the event; namely;—

“ That Colonel Meigs had moved with such uncommon celerity as to have transported his men by land and water ninety miles in twenty-five hours ! ”

On the arrival of the time for active operations the Congress resolved that a camp should be formed on the western side of Philadelphia. General Washington however had already formed his plan for the ensuing campaign, of which this arrangement formed no part. He therefore requested that, if such a camp were formed, it might consist wholly of militia. In the expectation that General Howe would either attempt to gain possession of the high lands on the North River, and thus co-operate with General Burgoyne from Canada; or renew the plan of the last campaign, to march through New Jersey to Pennsylvania, the general determined to post his army upon the strong country along Middlebrook, in New Jersey, north of the road through Brunswick to Philadelphia. He was thus in a position to protect Philadelphia and a great part of New Jersey, and by the disposition of his forces could either reinforce Ticonderoga, should Burgoyne attack that post, or reinforce his army from thence, should Burgoyne unite with Sir William Howe.

With his accustomed discernment Washington turned this situation to every account of which it

was capable. His camp winding along the course of the hills was strongly entrenched and fortified, and well covered with artillery, and both by its natural and artificial defences presented great difficulty of approach. In this situation he also commanded a view of the British encampment on the hills of Brunswick. His effective forces at this time did not amount to seven thousand, and of these many were raw recruits who had never faced an enemy.

About the middle of June Sir William Howe commenced a march towards the Delaware, hoping by this manœuvre to draw General Washington out of his well-fortified position in order to oppose the crossing of the enemy. But in this expectation he strangely miscalculated the discernment of his adversary. Immediately on this movement Washington wrote to one of his generals as follows:—

“The views of the enemy must be to destroy this army and get possession of Philadelphia. I am however clearly of opinion, that they will not move that way until they have endeavoured to give a severe blow to this army. The risk would be too great to attempt to cross the river when they must expect to meet a formidable opposition in front, and would have such a force as ours in the rear. They might possibly be successful, but the probability would be infinitely against them. Should they be imprudent enough to make the attempt I shall keep close upon their heels, and do everything in my power to make the project fatal to them.

“But besides the argument in favour of their intending in the first place a stroke at this army, drawn from the policy of the measure, every

appearance contributes to confirm the opinion. Had their design been for the Delaware in the first instance, they would probably have made a secret rapid march for it, and not have halted so as to awaken our attention, and give us time to prepare for obstructing them. Instead of that they have only advanced to a position necessary to facilitate an attack on our right, the part in which we are most exposed. In addition to this circumstance they have come out as light as possible, leaving all their baggage, provisions, boats, and bridges at Brunswick. This plainly contradicts the idea of their intending to push for Delaware."

Finding that the American army could not be enticed from a position in which he deemed it unsafe to attack them, General Howe determined to withdraw his army from Jersey, and to embark them as speedily as possible for the Chesapeake, or the Delaware, with a view to invade Philadelphia. On the 19th of June, in the night, he left his works half finished and returned to Brunswick, from whence he proceeded to Amboy on the 22nd, and threw a bridge over the channel which separates the continent from Staten Island. Over this he passed the heavy baggage and part of his troops to that island from whence the embarkation of his army was to be made.

These movements were not unexpected by General Washington. He detached some light parties to annoy the rear of the enemy, and moved his strong camp from Middlebrook to Quibbletown, which is six or seven miles from thence on the road to Amboy. Lord Stirling's division was advanced a few miles lower, in order to co-operate

with the parties which were on the lines, should the retreat from Amboy offer the means of injuring their rear.

In this state of things it appeared practicable to General Howe to bring on an engagement. With this view, and probably in the hope of turning the left of the American army and gaining the heights behind them, he recalled on the night of the 25th the troops which had passed over to Staten Island, and very early next morning the army made a rapid movement in two columns to Westfield. The right, under the command of Lord Cornwallis, took the route by Woodbridge to the Scotch Plains, and the left, accompanied by Sir William Howe in person, marched by Metuckin Meeting-house to join the rear of the right column in the road from thence to the Scotch Plains. It was intended that the left should have taken a separate route about two miles after their junction with the other columns, in order to have attacked the left flank of the American army at Quibbletown, while Lord Cornwallis should gain the heights on the left of the camp at Middlebrook. Four battalions with six pieces of cannon were detached to take post at Bonhamtown.

About Woodbridge the right column of the enemy fell in with one of the light parties detached to watch their motions, and notice being thus received of this movement, General Washington immediately penetrated its object and discerned his danger. The whole army was instantly put in motion. It regained with the utmost celerity the camp at Middlebrook, and took possession of the heights on the left, which it was supposed the enemy had designed to seize. Lord Cornwallis

on his route fell in with Lord Stirling, and a smart skirmish ensued, in which the latter was driven from his ground with the loss of a few field pieces and a few men. From thence he retreated to the hills about the Scotch Plains, and was pursued as far as Westfield. Here the column under Lord Cornwallis halted, and perceiving the passes in the mountains on the left of the American camp to be guarded, and consequently that the object for which this skilful manœuvre had been made was unattainable, he returned to Amboy, and the whole army crossed over to Staten Island, from whence the embarkation for the Delaware or Chesapeake was to take place.

Despairing of being able to penetrate Pennsylvania by way of the Jerseys, General Howe passed over in person to Staten Island, from which point he resolved to prosecute the future steps of his campaign by the assistance of his fleet. What his views might be it was difficult for Washington to ascertain. The whole coast of the United States was open to the enemy, who might sail to any part of it with far greater rapidity than he could be followed. Washington was inclined to believe that General Howe's intention was to move up the Hudson, and co-operate with General Burgoyne, and under this impression he moved a part of his army to Peek's Kill, and posted another portion at Trenton to be in readiness if necessary to protect Philadelphia. While in this state of uncertainty, he received information that Howe had embarked with sixteen thousand men, and had steered southward. Still he apprehended that this might be a feint, and anxiously watched the north, till he was further informed that the British general had

proceeded to the Chesapeak. The plans of the enemy were then distinctly developed. It was evident that he intended to march through Delaware and take possession of Philadelphia: much time was lost in the voyage in consequence of unfavourable winds. Though they set sail on the 23rd of July, they did not arrive at Elk Ferry, the place of their landing, till the 25th of August. General Howe had no sooner disembarked his troops than he advanced through the country by forced marches till he arrived within two miles of the American army, which, having proceeded rapidly from Jersey to the present scene of action, was stationed at Newport.

The hostile armies approached each other on the 3rd of September. As the royal troops advanced it became evident that Howe's design was to gain the right of the American army. To counteract this attempt Washington continued to fall back until he crossed the river Brandywine at Chadd's Ford. Here he made a stand in order to oppose the landing of the British. It would appear from all accounts that this step was taken in opposition to his better judgment; but the opinion of Congress, and the general sentiment of America that a decided effort should be made at this place to save Philadelphia, seems to have determined the conduct of the commander-in-chief.

Early in the morning of the 11th the British pushed forward to Chadd's Ford, determined to force a passage. About noon Washington received intelligence that a large column of the enemy had marched up the country, and fallen into the road which crosses the Brandywine above its forks. Upon this he detached the right wing of his army

to attack the left of this column on its progress down the north side of the Brandywine, while he himself prepared for the daring measure of recrossing the river with his centre and left, and attacking the remaining division of the British army at Chadd's Ford.

While issuing orders for the execution of these plans the information which had led to them was contradicted. In the midst of this uncertainty it was ascertained that Sir William Howe in person had crossed the river at the forks, and was proceeding down its north side to attack the Americans. A formidable attack was expected, and dispositions were made to repel it with all possible despatch. Before they could be completed an attack was made by the British, under Lord Cornwallis, upon General Sullivan's division; which, after a severe action, gave way. At length the whole line yielded; and the utmost that General Washington could do, who came up promptly at the head of Green's division, was to cover the retreat of his troops and check the pursuit of the enemy.

The defeat of the Brandywine produced comparatively little depression upon the Congress or the army. The superior power of the British army had been opposed with a degree of spirit to which the annals of the opposite party bear ample testimony. Washington promptly augmented his army by reinforcements from Peek's Kill, and prepared for another general action before he would surrender Philadelphia to the royal army. This action took place on the 15th, but was interrupted by so severe a storm as rendered the fire-arms of the Americans entirely unfit for use, and fortunately

prevented the pursuit of the British. On the following day Sir William Howe found no obstruction between him and the object of his wishes, and entered Philadelphia in triumph.

Having found it impossible to preserve Philadelphia from the victorious army, General Washington next endeavoured to render Howe's occupation of it impracticable by obstructing the navigation of the Delaware. For this purpose he strongly fortified the opposite forts on Mud Island and Red Bank, and sank in the channel between them a number of large frames composed of transverse beams, and armed with iron points, which would destroy any vessel that might strike against them. By this means it was hoped that the British supplies by water would be cut off, while General Washington, with the continental army, might cut them off by land on the side of Pennsylvania.

General Howe had no sooner taken possession of Philadelphia than he commenced batteries to command the river. Before these were completed they were attacked by the American frigate Delaware, of thirty-two guns, and some smaller vessels. Upon the falling of the tide the Delaware grounded, and being played upon by the battalion field pieces of the British was obliged to strike. The other vessels retired with the loss of a schooner which was driven ashore.

The process of blocking up the river with the frames which have been described, and which were termed *chevaux-de-frise*, had been conducted at two places about three miles apart. The lower of these stations was defended by a fort on a spot upon the Jersey side, called Billingspoint. From this fort it was resolved to dislodge the Americans,

and the service was committed to Colonel Stirling, and was performed by him without loss or opposition. On his approach the garrison, which was entirely of militia, having spiked their artillery and set fire to the barracks, retired without firing a gun. It now became practicable to weigh up the obstacles in the channel without danger from the fort, and a narrow and difficult passage for ships was opened through this lower barrier.

The next object was to convey a large stock of provisions to Philadelphia, and for this purpose large parties were detached from the main bodies of the army. This arrangement appeared to Washington to offer an opportunity of making a decisive attack upon the camp at German town. The most judicious arrangements were made for this daring enterprise, and the first part of its execution was most successful. The British piquets were driven in, and the fortieth regiment were obliged to retire, leaving all their baggage in the possession of the enemy. In the midst however of their flight, and while hotly pursued, they found means to throw themselves into a large store-house directly in the way of the Americans, from the windows of which they kept up so destructive a fire as induced the Americans to endeavour to storm it. They even brought up a field piece and played upon it without effect, and this movement of the British, together with a heavy fog which prevented the American force from acting in concert, defeated an enterprise which promised and deserved the happiest result. The route which they were obliged to take was obstructed by a number of obstacles which divided their force and occasioned confusion. The confidence of the soldiers diminished every moment, and General

Washington was compelled to abandon all hopes of victory, and to apply himself to secure the retreat of his forces.

Notwithstanding the ill-success of this expedition Congress expressed their approbation both of its plan and execution, and voted their thanks to the general and the army.

The British general now turned his attention to the works on the Delaware, the destruction of which was absolutely necessary to his continuance in Philadelphia. Count Donop was despatched with a strong body of Hessians to attack Fort Mercer, on Red Bank, which commanded the Delaware on the Jersey side. The defence of this fort reflects the highest honour on Colonel Green and the five hundred men who composed his garrison. Not being sufficient in number to man the out-works he contented himself with galling the enemy from them upon their approach, and then retiring within them. The unfortunate commander followed with intrepidity, and was met by a deadly fire from a protected foe. The Count soon fell mortally wounded, the second in command soon after fell, and the third drew off the forces without effecting any serious injury, but having sustained a loss of four hundred killed and wounded.

Meanwhile Fort Mifflin (on Mud Island) was attacked both by batteries on the shore and by shipping, and was battered incessantly from the 10th to the 16th of November. By this time every defence was destroyed, and every cannon dismounted, so that ships could approach so near as to throw hand grenades from their tops. The garrison were then ordered to quit the post; and Red Bank, being now no longer useful, was aban-

doned on the approach of Lord Cornwallis with five thousand men to invest it. Thus the fortifications of the Delaware being destroyed, the obstructions in its channel were removed, and after six weeks of incessant effort and great loss General Howe obtained the navigation of the Delaware, and thus opened a communication between his fleet and his army in Philadelphia.

General Washington now received a reinforcement from the northern army of four thousand men, and advanced to White Marsh, fourteen miles from Philadelphia, where he encamped in a very strong position. It was the wish of the Congress, and the general expectation of the public, that some decisive action should be risked to prevent the British from wintering in the metropolis. Washington, however, had too much prudence and too much patriotism to hazard the permanent liberty of his country on a single action, however much lustre it might reflect upon his arms. That, however, which he would not seek as a matter of choice, he found himself nearly compelled to by the conduct of the British general. On the 4th of December, General Howe marched his whole army out of Philadelphia to the American encampment, and took post in front of the American right; after manœuvring in vain to draw Washington from the position which he had so skilfully selected, and finding that it would not otherwise be safe to attack him, he on the afternoon of the 8th returned to Philadelphia with great rapidity, having effected nothing.

The winter had now set in with great severity, and the American troops were badly clothed and almost destitute of blankets. Notwithstanding

these privations, which seemed to render good winter quarters absolutely necessary, Washington determined to sacrifice the comforts which his troops had a right to expect to the welfare of his country. He therefore led them to Valley Forge, a strong position behind Philadelphia, where for some time their sufferings were extreme;—such indeed that nothing but the most absolute devotion to their general could have induced them to undergo. These were at length mitigated by the building of wooden huts for shelter. As to the commissary department, some idea may be formed of the manner in which it was administered from the following remarks addressed to Congress in the general's letter of January the 5th. Speaking of the measures of Congress in this department, he says:—

“ I trust they will be vigorous or the army cannot exist. It will never answer to procure supplies of clothing or provision by coercive measures:—the small seizures made of the former a few days ago in consequence of the most pressing and absolute necessity,—when that or to dissolve was the alternative,—excited the greatest alarm and uneasiness, even among our best and warmest friends. Such proceedings may give a momentary relief, but, if repeated, will prove of the most pernicious consequence. Besides spreading disaffection, jealousy, and fear in the people, they never fail even in the most veteran troops, under the most rigid and exact discipline, to raise in the soldiery a disposition to licentiousness, to plunder, and robbery, difficult to suppress afterwards; and which has proved not only ruinous to the inhabitants but in many instances to armies themselves. I regret the occasion that compelled us to the measure the

other day, and shall consider it among the greatest of our misfortunes if we should be under the necessity of practising it again.

“ I am now under the necessity of keeping several parties from the army threshing grain, that our supplies may not fail, but this will not do. As to meat, our stock is trifling, not being sufficient for more than two days, if so long, with the most sparing economy.”

CHAPTER XX.

Successes of the American Arms in Canada—Enlistment of the American Indians into the War by the British—Indignant Opposition of Mr. Burke to this Measure in the House of Commons—Of Lord Chatham in the House of Lords—Lord Chatham's Speech—Failure of these Remonstrances—Conspiracy against General Washington—Correspondence with General Gates—With Patrick Henry—Confession of General Conway.

WHILE the British arms were crowned with some degree of success in the central provinces, though that success was purchased by sufferings and expense to which it bore no proportion, there was another scene of action on which the invaders encountered nothing but disappointment and defeat. The war in the north was conducted by General Burgoyne, a British officer of the highest ability. He was opposed in the early part of the campaign by General Schuyler, and subsequently by General Gates. But although Washington did not command in this war, he was consulted on most of the measures employed, and frequently with that noble disinterestedness for which he was so distinguished, he parted with his own troops in such numbers as to cramp his operations in order to enable his colleagues to follow up their successes and augment their renown.

It will be highly instructive, as indicating the sentiments of the British government towards

America, to give some little attention to the arrangements of this war; more particularly as the operations of General Burgoyne were in no wise spontaneous, but were determined in an unusual degree by the dictates of the cabinet. One of the most comprehensive and authentic histories* of these events, and one, moreover, written under strong partiality to the policy of government, introduces the narrative of the northern campaign in the following words:—

“ The operations in the southern or central provinces, however efficacious or extensive, did not by any means include all the great objects of the campaign. Something was of course to be expected on the part of Canada, where a very considerable army had been collected, and, by the success of the last campaign on the lakes, had a way opened for it to penetrate into the back parts of the New England and New York provinces. The great body was to be seconded by a lesser expedition from the upper part of Canada, by the way of Oswego, to the Mohawk River. This scheme was eagerly adopted by the ministers, who founded the greatest hopes on its success. All the advantages that had ever been expected from the complete possession of Hudson's River, the establishment of a communication between the two armies, the cutting off all intercourse between the northern and southern colonies, with the consequent opportunity of crushing the former, detached and cut off from all assistance, it was now hoped, would have been realised. *The greater hopes were conceived of it from the opinions entertained of the effect of the savages on the minds of the Americans. It was*

* The Annual Register.

known that the provincials in general were in great dread of them from their desolating manner of making war. These were therefore collected at great expense, and with much labour, from all parts of the continent. In a word, this expedition seemed to become the favourite object of the present year."

The plan of enlisting the American Indians, to which special notice is pointed above, may be considered as indicating that the fury of the enemies of liberty in England had attained its greatest height. With this fact the two most distinguished men in the British parliament seemed fully impressed, and they brought against it in both houses an array of reasoning and eloquence to which universal history can scarcely afford a parallel. In the House of Commons Mr. Burke moved for all papers relative to the military employment of the American Indians in this war, and supported his motion in a speech which lasted three hours and a half. Unhappily this astonishing production is lost to posterity. Strangers were excluded from the gallery of the house during the debate. But we have the opinion of many competent judges who were privileged to hear it, that it was even superior to those immortal compositions of the same mind, which, ever since their delivery have awakened the wonder and admiration of the civilised world. The exclusion of strangers, however, on this occasion, appears from the declaration of one honourable member not to have been without its advantages. We are told that Governor Johnstone, in the course of the debate, congratulated the house upon this circumstance, as otherwise the indignation of the public would have been excited to such an

ungovernable degree that the noble abettors of the war (Lords North and Germain) would probably have been torn in pieces before they could reach their homes.

In the course of the debate Colonel Barré conjured Mr. Burke to give this speech to posterity, and added, that, if it were published, he would with his own hands nail a copy of it on every church door, by the side of his Majesty's recent proclamation for a general fast. This motion, and a number of similar propositions with which he followed it, were separately negatived by large majorities.

In the House of Lords the cause of freedom and humanity was once more pleaded by its never-failing advocate, the Earl of Chatham. In the debate on the address in answer to the King's speech, November the 18th, 1777, the voice of that truly noble lord was heard, almost for the last time. Enfeebled with suffering, and supported upon his crutches, he was assisted to his usual seat; from which, without rising, or uncovering his majestic head, he once more instructed the country, and appalled the government with his prophetic eloquence. After concurring in the congratulations expressed in the address on the birth of another princess, his lordship continued:—

“ But I must stop here; my courtly complaisance will carry me no further; I will not join in congratulation on misfortune and disgrace. I cannot concur in a blind and servile address which approves, and endeavours to sanctify the monstrous measures, which have heaped disgrace and misfortune upon us—which have brought ruin to our doors. This, my lords, is a perilous and tremendous moment. It is not a time for adulation. The smoothness of

flattery cannot now avail—cannot save us in this rugged and awful crisis. It is now necessary to instruct the throne in the language of truth. We must dispel the delusion and the darkness which envelope it.

But yesterday,
And England might have stood against the world;
Now, none so poor to do her reverence.

I use the words of a poet, but though it be poetry it is no fiction. It is a shameful truth that not only the power and strength of this country are wasting away and expiring, but her well-earned glories—her true honour and substantial dignity are sacrificed. France, my lords, has insulted you; she has encouraged and sustained America, and whether America be wrong or right the dignity of this country ought to spurn at the officious insult of French interference. The ministers and ambassadors of those who are called rebels and enemies are in Paris—in Paris they transact the reciprocal interests of America and France. Can there be a more mortifying insult? Can even our ministers sustain a more humiliating disgrace? Do they dare to resist it? Do they presume even to hint a vindication of their honour and the dignity of the state, by requiring the dismissal of the plenipotentiaries of America? Such is the degradation to which they have reduced the glories of England! The people whom they affect to call contemptible rebels, but whose growing power has at length obtained the name of enemies, the people with whom they have engaged this country in war, and against whom they command our implicit support in every measure of desperate hostility—this people, despised as rebels or acknowledged as enemies, are

abetted against you, supplied with every military store, their interests consulted, and their ambassadors entertained by your inveterate enemy! And our ministers dare not interpose with dignity or effect. Is this the honour of a great kingdom? Is this the indignant spirit of England, who 'but yesterday,' gave law to the House of Bourbon?

"My lords, this ruinous and ignominious situation, where we cannot act with success nor suffer with honour, calls upon us to remonstrate in the strongest and loudest language of truth,—to rescue the ear of majesty from the delusions which surround it. The desperate state of our arms abroad is in part known. No man thinks more highly of them than I do. I love and honour the English troops, I know their virtues and their valour; I know they can achieve anything except impossibilities, and I know that the conquest of English America is an impossibility. You cannot,—I venture to say it,—you cannot conquer America. Your armies last war effected everything that could be effected, and what was it? It cost a numerous army, under the command of a most able general (Sir Jeffery Amherst), now a noble lord in this house, a long and laborious campaign to expel five thousand Frenchmen from French America. My lords, you cannot conquer America. What is your present situation there? We do not know the worst, but we know that in three campaigns we have done nothing and suffered much. Besides the sufferings, perhaps total loss, of the northern force*, the best ap-

* The allusion here is to General Burgoyne's army. "The history of it," says Boyd, by whom this speech was reported, "is short; most of its brave officers fell, and about half its numbers. The rest surrendered to the enemy on the 17th of

pointed army that ever took the field, commanded by Sir William Howe, has retired from the American lines ; he was obliged to relinquish his attempt ; and with great delay and danger to adopt a new and distant plan of operations. We shall soon know, and in any event have reason to lament what may have happened since. As to conquest, therefore, my lords, I repeat, it is impossible. You may swell every expense and every effort still more extravagantly, pile and accumulate every assistance you can buy or borrow, traffic and barter with every little German prince that sells and sends his subjects to the shambles of a foreigner ; your efforts are for ever vain and impotent—doubly so from this mercenary aid on which you rely ; for it irritates to an incurable resentment the minds of your enemies, to overrun them with the mercenary sons of rapine and plunder, devoting them and their possessions to the rapacity of hireling cruelty. If I were an American as I am an Englishman, while a foreign troop was landed in my country I never would lay down my arms—never—never—never.

“ Your whole army is infected with the contagion of these illiberal allies. The spirit of plunder and rapine is gone forth among them. I know it ; and notwithstanding what the noble earl who moved the address has given as his opinion of the American army, I know from authentic information, and the most experienced officers, that our discipline is deeply wounded. Whilst this is notoriously our sinking situation America grows and flourishes ;

October, 1777. The account of this total loss, as the noble speaker's prescience expressed it on the 18th of November, arrived in England in the beginning of December.”

whilst our strength and discipline are lowered theirs are rising and improving.

“ But, my lords, who is the man, that in addition to these disgraces and mischiefs of our army has dared to authorise and associate to our arms the tomahawk and scalping knife of the savage? To call into civilised alliance the wild and inhuman savage of the woods, to delegate to the merciless Indian the defence of disputed rights, and to wage the horrors of his barbarous war against our brethren? My lords, these enormities cry aloud for redress and punishment; unless thoroughly done away it will be a stain on the national character—it is a violation of the spirit of the constitution, and I believe against law. It is not the least of our national misfortunes that the strength and character of our army are thus impaired, infected with the mercenary spirit of robbery and rapine. Familiarised to the horrid scenes of savage cruelty, it can no longer boast of the noble and generous principles which dignify a soldier, no longer sympathise with the dignity of the royal banner, nor feel the pride, ‘the pomp, and circumstance of glorious war’ that make ambition virtue! What makes ambition virtue? the sense of honour. But is the sense of honour consistent with the spirit of plunder or the practice of murder? Can it flow from mercenary motives, or can it prompt to cruel deeds? Besides these murderers and plunderers, let me ask our ministers what other allies have they acquired? What other powers have they associated to their cause? Have they entered into alliance with the King of the Gypsies? Nothing, my lords, is too low or too ludicrous to be consistent with their counsels.

“The independent views of America have been stated and asserted as the foundation of this address. My lords, no man wishes for the due dependence of America on this country more than I do. To preserve it, and not confirm that state of independence into which your measures hitherto have driven them, is the object which we ought to unite in attaining. The Americans contending for their rights against arbitrary exactions, I love and admire—it is the struggle of free and virtuous patriots: but contending for independency and total disconnection from England, as an Englishman I cannot wish them success; for in a due constitutional dependency, including the ancient supremacy of this country in regulating their commerce and navigation, consists the mutual happiness and prosperity both of England and America. She derived assistance and protection from us, and we reaped from her the most important advantages;—she was, indeed, the fountain of our wealth, the nerve of our strength, the nursery and basis of our naval power. It is our duty, therefore, my lords, if we wish to save our country, most seriously to endeavour the recovery of these most beneficial subjects, and in this perilous crisis the present moment may be the only one in which we can hope for success.”

After showing in the most powerful manner the folly of regarding the Americans as mere rebels, and maintaining that they were acting upon great principles and hazarding a most important stake, his lordship took a striking view of the inability of Great Britain to oppose such resistance:—

“The river of Lisbon,” said he, “in the possession of our enemies!—The seas swept by American privateers! our channel trade torn to

pieces by them ! In this complicated crisis of danger, weakness at home and calamity abroad,—terrified and insulted by the neighbouring powers,—unable to act in America, or acting only to be destroyed ;—where is the man with the forehead to promise or hope for success in such a situation, or from perseverance in the measures which have driven us to it ? Who has the forehead to do so ? Where is the man ? I should be glad to see his face.

“ You cannot conciliate America by your present measures,—you cannot subdue her by your present or by any measures. What then can you do ? You cannot conquer, you cannot gain, but you can *address* ! you can lull the fears and anxieties of the moment into an ignorance of the dangers which should produce them. But, my lords, the time demands the language of truth, we must not now apply ‘ the flattering unction ’ of servile compliance or blind complaisance. In a just and necessary war to maintain the rights or honour of my country, I would strip the shirt from my back to support it. But in such a war as this, unjust in its principle, impracticable in its means, and ruinous in its consequences, I would not contribute a single effort, nor a single shilling. I do not call for vengeance on the heads of those who have been guilty, I only recommend to them to make their retreat ; let them walk off, and let them make haste, or let them be assured that speedy and condign punishment will overtake them.

“ My lords, I have submitted to you with the freedom and truth which I think my duty, my sentiments on your awful situation. I have laid before you the ruin of your power, the disgrace of

your reputation, the pollution of your discipline, the contamination of your morals, the complication of calamities, foreign and domestic, that overwhelm your sinking country. Your dearest interests, your own liberties, the constitution itself, totters to the foundation. All this disgraceful danger, this multitude of misery, is the monstrous offspring of this unnatural war. We have been deceived and deluded too long: let us now stop short: this is the crisis,—perhaps the only crisis of time and situation to give us a possibility of escape from the fatal effects of our delusions. But if in an obstinate and infatuated perseverance in folly we slavishly echo the peremptory words this day presented to us, nothing can save this devoted country from complete and final ruin. We madly rush into multiplied miseries, and ‘confusion worse confounded.’ ”

In the course of the debate, Lord Suffolk, secretary of state for the northern department, undertook to defend the employment of the Indians in the war. His lordship contended that, besides its policy and necessity, the measure was also allowable on principle; for that “it was perfectly justifiable to use all the measures that God and nature put into our hands.”

The open avowal of these sentiments so roused the indignation of the venerable statesman that he suddenly arose and vented his feelings in one of the most extraordinary bursts of impassioned eloquence that the pen of history has recorded.

“I am astonished,” exclaimed his lordship, “I am shocked to hear such principles confessed; to hear them avowed in this house, or even in this country. My lords, I did not intend to have

encroached again upon your attention, but I cannot repress my indignation—I feel myself impelled to speak. My lords, we are called upon as members of this house, as men, and as christians, to protest against such horrible notions uttered near the throne, and polluting the ear of Majesty.—‘That God and nature have put into our hands!’—What ideas of God and nature that noble lord may entertain, I know not, but I know that such detestable principles are equally abhorrent to religion and humanity. What! to attribute the sacred sanction of God and nature to the massacres of the Indian scalping-knife! to the cannibal savage, torturing, murdering, devouring, drinking the blood of his mangled victims! Such notions shock every precept of morality, every feeling of humanity, every sentiment of honour. These abominable principles, and this more abominable avowal of them, demand the most decisive indignation. I call upon that right reverend, and this most learned bench to vindicate the religion of their God, to support the justice of their country. I call upon the bishops to interpose the unsullied sanctity of their lawn, upon the judges to interpose the purity of their ermine, to save us from this pollution. I call upon the honour of your lordships to reverence the dignity of your ancestors, and to maintain your own. I call upon the spirit and humanity of my country to vindicate the national character. I invoke the genius of the constitution. From the tapestry that adorns these walls, I can imagine the immortal ancestor of this noble lord frowning with indignation at the disgrace of his country. In vain did he defend the liberty, and establish the religion of Britain against the tyranny of Rome,

if these worse than popish cruelties and inquisitorial practices are endured among us. To send forth the merciless cannibal thirsting for blood—against whom?—your protestant brethren! To lay waste their country, to desolate their dwellings, and to extirpate their race and name by the aid and instrumentality of these horrible hell-hounds of war,—these hell-hounds, I say, of savage war. Spain can no longer boast pre-eminence in barbarity. She armed herself with blood-hounds to extirpate the wretched natives of Mexico; but we, more ruthless, loose these ‘dogs of war’ against our countrymen in America,—of the same language, laws, liberties, and religion,—endeared to us by every tie which should sanctify humanity. My lords, I solemnly call upon your lordships, and upon every order of men in the state, to stamp upon this infamous procedure the stigma of the public abhorrence. More particularly I implore the prelates of our holy religion to do away this iniquity. Let them perform a lustration to purify their country from this deep and deadly sin.

“My lords, I am old and weak, and at present unable to say more; but my feelings and indignation would not permit me to say less. I could not have slept this night in my bed, nor reposed my head upon my pillow, without expressing my eternal abhorrence of such enormous and detestable principles*.”

* His lordship was spared but a short time to advocate these noble sentiments. He was carried into the house on the 7th of April following to bear his dying testimony against the tyrannical measures of government. He commenced his address with an ejaculation of gratitude to God for permitting him once more to appear there in the discharge of his duty to America and

The motion which was recommended in this matchless oration, met with the same treatment as Mr. Burke's remonstrances. The British ministry were madly resolved to hazard the glory and prosperity of their country upon the infatuated scheme which they had conceived, and the British arms suffered that ignominious and total defeat which was the fit reward of such monstrous counsels.

The splendour* with which the capitulation of the British army had surrounded the military reputation of General Gates, acquired some advocates for the opinion, that the arms of America would be more fortunate, if that gentleman should be elevated to the supreme command. He could not be supposed to be himself hostile to the prevalence of such an opinion, and some parts of his conduct were sufficient to show that, if it did not originate with him, he was not among the last to adopt it. He had not only omitted to communicate to General Washington the success of his army, after the victory of the 7th of October had opened to him the prospect of finally destroying the enemy opposed to him; but he carried on a correspondence with General Conway, in which that officer had expressed himself with great contempt of the com-

to mankind. During his speech it is said, that such was the affecting stillness of the house, that if any one had dropped a handkerchief the noise would have been noticed. In the course of it he stated his impression that he was addressing their lordships for the last time; and in rising at a subsequent period of the debate to reply to the Duke of Richmond, he sunk back and fainted. He was borne out immediately to the bed in which he expired, leaving to the latest generations of mankind a name sanctified by all the genius and virtue which can adorn a man, a statesman, and a patriot.

* Marshall's Life of General Washington.

mander-in-chief; and, on the disclosure of this circumstance, General Gates had demanded the name of the informer, in a letter expressed in terms by no means conciliatory, and which was accompanied by the very extraordinary circumstance of being passed through Congress.

The following are the letters which passed between the two generals on this subject.

“Albany, December 8th, 1777.

“SIR,

“I SHALL not attempt to describe what, as a private gentleman, I cannot help feeling, on representing to my mind, the disagreeable situation in which confidential letters, when exposed to public inspection, may place an unsuspecting correspondent; but, as a public officer, I conjure your excellency, to give me all the assistance you can, in tracing out the author of the infidelity, which put extracts from General Conway's letters to me into your hands. Those letters have been stealthily copied, but, which of them, when, or by whom, is to me, as yet, an unfathomable secret.

“There is not one officer in my suite, nor amongst those who have a free access to me, upon whom I could, with the least justification to myself, fix the suspicion; and yet my uneasiness may deprive me of the usefulness of the worthiest men. It is, I believe, in your excellency's power to do me, and the United States a very important service, by detecting a wretch, who may betray me, and capitally injure the very operations under your immediate direction. For this reason, sir, I beg your excellency will favour me with the proofs you can

procure to that effect. But the crime being eventually so important, that the least loss of time may be attended with the worst consequences ; and, it being unknown to me, whether the letter came to you from a member of Congress, or from an officer, I shall have the honour of transmitting a copy of this to the president, that Congress may, in concert with your excellency, obtain, as soon as possible, a discovery, which so deeply affects the safety of the States. Crimes of that magnitude ought not to remain unpunished.

“ I have the honour to be, sir,

“ With the greatest respect,

“ Your excellency’s most

“ Humble, and most obedient servant,

“ HORATIO GATES.”

“ His Excellency

“ General Washington.”

“ Valley Forge, January 4th, 1778.

“ SIR,

“ YOUR letter of the 8th ult. came to my hands a few days ago, and to my great surprise informed me, that a copy of it had been sent to Congress, for what reason I find myself unable to account ; but as some end doubtless was intended to be answered by it, I am laid under the disagreeable necessity of returning my answer through the same channel, lest any member of that honourable body should harbour an unfavourable suspicion of my having practised some indirect means to come at the contents of the confidential letters between you and General Conway.

“ I am to inform you, that ——— on his way to Congress, in the month of October last, fell in

with Lord Stirling at Reading; and, not in confidence that I ever understood, informed his aid-de-camp, Major Macwilliams, that General Conway had written thus to you: 'Heaven has been determined to save your country, or a weak general and bad counsellors would have ruined it.' Lord Stirling, from motives of friendship, transmitted the account with this remark, 'The enclosed was communicated by ——— to Major Williams; such wicked duplicity of conduct I shall always think it my duty to detect.'

"In consequence of this information, and without having anything more in view than merely to show that gentleman that I was not unapprised of his intriguing disposition, I wrote him a letter in these words; 'Sir, a letter which I received last night, contained the following paragraph:—

"In a letter from General Conway to General Gates, he says, 'Heaven has been determined to save your country; or a weak general and bad counsellors would have ruined it.' I am sir, &c.

"Neither the letter, nor the information which occasioned it, was ever, directly or indirectly, communicated by me to a single officer in this army, (out of my own family,) excepting the Marquis de la Fayette, who, having been spoken to on this subject by General Conway, applied for, and saw, under injunctions of secrecy, the letter which contained this information; so desirous was I of concealing every matter that could, in its consequences, give the smallest interruption to the tranquillity of this army, or afford a gleam of hope to the enemy by dissensions therein.

"Thus, sir, with an openness and candour which I hope will ever characterise and mark my conduct,

have I complied with your request. The only concern I feel upon the occasion, finding how matters stand, is, that in doing this, I have necessarily been obliged to name a gentleman who, I am persuaded, (although I never exchanged a word with him upon the subject,) thought he was rather doing an act of justice, than committing an act of infidelity; and sure I am, that, till Lord Stirling's letter came to my hands, I never knew that General Conway (whom I viewed in the light of a stranger to you) was a correspondent of yours, much less did I suspect that I was the subject of your confidential letters. Pardon me, then, for adding, that, so far from conceiving the safety of the States can be affected, or in the smallest degree injured, by a discovery of this kind, or that I should be called upon in such solemn terms to point out the author, that I considered the information as coming from yourself, and given with a friendly view to forewarn, and consequently forearm me against a secret enemy, or in other words, a dangerous incendiary, in which character, sooner or later, this country will know General Conway. But in this, as in other matters of late, I have found myself mistaken.

"I am, sir,

"Your most obedient servant,

"G. WASHINGTON."

"To Major-general Gates."

During the existence of this faction, an attempt appears to have been made to alienate the affections of the leading political characters in the States from the commander-in-chief. The following letters exhibit a very unsuccessful effort of this sort,

which was made on Governor Henry, of Virginia, by a gentleman not supposed to be a member from that state.

“ Williamsburg, Feb. 20th, 1778.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ YOU will no doubt be surprised at seeing the inclosed letter, in which the encomiums bestowed on me are as undeserved, as the censures aimed at you are unjust. I am sorry there should be one man who counts himself my friend, who is not yours.

“ Perhaps, I give you needless trouble in handing you this paper. The writer of it may be too insignificant to deserve any notice. If I knew this to be the case, I should not have intruded on your time, which is so precious. But there may possibly be some scheme or party forming to your prejudice. The enclosed leads to such a suspicion. Believe me, sir, I have too high a sense of the obligations America has to you, to abet or countenance so unworthy a proceeding. The most exalted merit hath ever been found to attract envy. But I please myself with the hope, that the same fortitude and greatness of mind, which have hitherto braved all the difficulties and dangers inseparable from your station, will rise superior to every attempt of the envious partizan.

“ I really cannot tell who is the writer of this letter, which not a little perplexes me. The handwriting is altogether strange to me.

“ To give you the trouble of this, gives me pain. It would suit my inclination better to give you some assistance in the great business of the war. But I will not conceal anything from you by which

you may be affected: for I really think your personal welfare, and the happiness of America, are intimately connected. I beg you will be assured of that high regard and esteem with which I ever am,

“ Dear sir,

“ Your affectionate friend,

“ and very humble servant,

“ P. HENRY.”

“ His Excellency General Washington,

“ at Head-quarters.”

The anonymous letter enclosed was as follows:—

“ York Town, Jan. 12th, 1778.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ THE common danger of our country first brought you and me together. I recollect with pleasure the influence of your conversation and eloquence upon the opinions of this country in the beginning of the present controversy. You first taught us to shake off our idolatrous attachment to royalty, and to oppose its encroachments upon our liberties with our very lives. By these means you saved us from ruin. The independence of America is the offspring of that liberal spirit of thinking and acting which followed the destruction of the spectres of kings, and the mighty power of Great Britain.

“ But, sir, we have only passed the Red Sea. A dreary wilderness is still before us; and unless a Moses or a Joshua are raised up in our behalf, we must perish before we reach the Promised Land. We have nothing to fear from our enemies on the way. General Howe, it is true, has taken Philadelphia. But he has only changed his prison. His

dominions are bounded on all sides by his out sentries. America can only be undone by herself. She looks up to her counsels and arms for protection ; but alas ! what are they ? Her representation in Congress dwindled to only twenty-one members—her Adams, her Wilson, her Henry, are now no more among them. Her counsels weak—and partial remedies applied constantly for universal diseases. Her army—what is it ? A major-general belonging to it called it a few days ago, in my hearing, a *mob*. Discipline unknown or *wholly* neglected—the quarter-master's and commissary's departments filled with idleness, ignorance, and peculation—our hospitals crowded with six thousand sick, but half provided with necessaries or accommodations, and more dying in them in one month than perished in the field during the whole of the last campaign—the money depreciating without any effectual measures being taken to raise it—the country distracted with the Don Quixote attempt to regulate the prices of provisions ; an *artificial* famine created by it, and a *real* one dreaded from it—the spirit of the people failing through a more intimate acquaintance with the causes of our misfortunes — many submitting daily to General Howe, and more wishing to do it, only to avoid the calamities which threaten our country. But, is our cause desperate ?—By no means. We have wisdom, virtue, and strength enough to save us, if they could be called into action. The northern army has shown us what Americans are capable of doing with a GENERAL at their head. The spirit of the southern army is no ways inferior to the spirit of the northern. A Gates, a Lee, or a Conway, would in a few weeks

render them an irresistible body of men. The last of the above officers has accepted of the new office of inspector-general of our army, in order to reform abuses : but the remedy is only a palliative one. In one of his letters to a friend, he says, ‘A great and good God hath decreed America to be free, or the ———— and weak counsellors would have ruined her long ago.’ You may rest assured of *each* of the facts related in this letter. The author of it is one of your Philadelphia friends. A hint of his name, if found out by the handwriting, must not be mentioned to your most intimate friend. Even the letter *must* be thrown in the fire. But some of its contents ought to be made public, in order to awaken, enlighten, and alarm our country. I rely upon your prudence, and am, dear sir, with my usual attachment to *you*, and to our beloved independence,

“Yours sincerely.”

In another letter written previously to Washington’s reply, Mr. Henry says :—

“While you face the armed enemies of our liberties in the field, and, by the favour of God, have been kept unhurt, I trust your country will never harbour in her bosom the miscreant who would ruin her best supporter. I wish not to flatter ; but when arts unworthy honest men are used to defame and traduce you, I think it not amiss, but a duty, to assure you of that estimation in which the public hold you. Not that I think any testimony I can bear is necessary for your support or private satisfaction, for a bare recollection of what is past must give you sufficient pleasure in every circumstance of life ; but I cannot

help assuring you, on this occasion, of the high sense of gratitude which all ranks of men, in this your native country, bear to you. It will give me sincere pleasure to manifest my regards, and render my best services to you or yours. I don't like to make a parade of these things, and I know you are not fond of it; however, I hope the occasion will plead my excuse."

To these communications General Washington returned the following replies:—

"Valley-forge, March 27, 1778.

"DEAR SIR,

"ABOUT eight days past I was honoured with your favour of the 20th ultimo. Your friendship, sir, in transmitting me the anonymous letter you had received, lays me under the most grateful obligations, and, if anything could give a still further claim to my acknowledgments, it is the very polite and delicate terms with which you have been pleased to make the communication.

"I have ever been happy in supposing that I held a place in your esteem, and the proof of it you have afforded on this occasion, makes me peculiarly so. The favourable light in which you hold me is truly flattering; but I should feel much regret if I thought the happiness of America so intimately connected with my personal welfare, as you so obligingly seem to consider it. All I can say is, that she has ever had, and I trust she ever will have, my honest exertions to promote her interest. I cannot hope that my services have been the best; but my heart tells me they have been the best that I could render.

"That I may have erred in using the means in

my power for accomplishing the objects of the arduous, exalted station with which I am honoured, I cannot doubt; nor do I wish my conduct to be exempt from the reprehension it may deserve. Error is the portion of humanity, and to censure it, whether committed by this or that public character, is the prerogative of freemen. However, being intimately acquainted with the man I believe to be the author of the letter transmitted, and having always received from him the strongest professions of attachment and regard, I am constrained to consider him as not possessing a great degree of candour and honest sincerity, though his views in addressing you should have been the result of conviction, and founded in motives of public good. This is not the only secret insidious attempt that has been made to wound my reputation. There have been others equally base, cruel, and ungenerous; because conducted with as little frankness, and proceeding from views perhaps as personally interested. "I am, dear sir, &c.

"GEORGE WASHINGTON."

"To his Excellency Patrick Henry Esq.

"Governor of Virginia."

"Camp, March 28th, 1778.

"DEAR SIR,

"JUST as I was about to close my letter of yesterday, your favour of the fifth instant came to hand.

"I can only thank you again, in the language of the most undissembled gratitude, for your friendship; and assure you the indulgent disposition which Virginia in particular, and the states in general, entertain towards me, gives me the most

sensible pleasure. The approbation of my country is what I wish ; and, as far as my abilities and opportunity will permit, I hope I shall endeavour to deserve it : it is the highest reward to a feeling mind, and happy are they who so conduct themselves as to merit it.

“ The anonymous letter with which you was pleased to favour me, was written by ———, so far as I can judge from a similitude of hands. This man has been elaborate and studied in his professions of regard for me, and that long since the letter to you.

“ My caution to avoid anything that could injure the service, prevented me from communicating, except to a very few of my friends, the intrigues of a faction which I know was formed against me, since it might serve to publish our internal dissensions ; but their own restless zeal to advance their views has too clearly betrayed them, and made concealment on my part fruitless. I cannot precisely mark the extent of their views, but it appeared in general, that General Gates was to be exalted on the ruin of my reputation and influence. This I am authorised to say, from undeniable facts in my own possession, from publications, the evident scope of which could not be mistaken, and from private detractions industriously circulated. ———, it is commonly supposed, bore the second part of the cabal ; and General Conway, I know, was a very active and malignant partisan ; but I have good reason to believe that their machinations have recoiled most sensibly upon themselves.”

To Mr. Laurens, the president of Congress, and his private friend, who, in an official letter, had

communicated to him an anonymous charge laid before him as president, containing heavy accusations against the commander-in-chief, he thus expressed himself:—

“ I cannot sufficiently express the obligation I feel towards you for your friendship and politeness upon an occasion in which I am so deeply interested. I was not unapprised that a malignant faction had been for some time forming to my prejudice, which, conscious as I am of having ever done all in my power to answer the important purposes of the trust reposed in me, could not but give me some pain on a personal account: but my chief concern arises from an apprehension of the dangerous consequences which intestine dissensions may produce to the common cause.

“ As I have no other view than to promote the public good, and am unambitious of honours not founded in the approbation of my country, I would not desire in the least degree to suppress a free spirit of inquiry into any part of my conduct that even faction itself may deem reprehensible. The anonymous paper handed you exhibits many serious charges; and it is my wish that it may be submitted to Congress. This I am the more inclined to, as the suppression or concealment may possibly involve you in embarrassments hereafter, since it is uncertain how many, or who, may be privy to the contents.

“ My enemies take an ungenerous advantage of me. They know the delicacy of my situation, and that motives of policy deprive me of the defence I might otherwise make against their insidious attacks. They know I cannot combat their insinuations, however injurious, without disclosing

secrets it is of the utmost moment to conceal. But why should I expect to be exempt from censure, the unfailing lot of an elevated station? Merit and talents, which I cannot pretend to rival, have ever been subject to it. My heart tells me it has been my unremitted aim to do the best which circumstances would permit; yet I may have been very often mistaken in my judgment of the means, and may in many instances deserve the imputation of error."

The following extract is taken from a letter written about the same time to a gentleman in New England, who had expressed some anxious apprehensions, occasioned by a report that the commander-in-chief had determined to resign his station in the army:—

"I can assure you that no person ever heard me drop an expression that had a tendency to resignation. The same principles that led me to embark in the opposition to the arbitrary claims of Great Britain operate with additional force at this day; nor is it my desire to withdraw my services while they are considered of importance in the present contest: but to report a design of this kind is among the arts which those who are endeavouring to effect a change are practising to bring it to pass. I have said, and I still do say, that there is not an officer in the service of the United States that would return to the sweets of domestic life with more heart-felt joy than I should. But I would have this declaration accompanied by these sentiments, that, while the public are satisfied with my endeavours, I mean not to shrink from the cause: but the moment her voice, not that of faction, calls upon me to resign, I shall do it with as much

pleasure as ever the weary traveller retired to rest."

It is delightful to know that these invidious slanders, which for a time doubtless disturbed the peace of General Washington, ultimately redounded to his honour. Even the victorious troops who fought under General Gates indignantly resisted this attempt to raise him to the place of their beloved general. The resentment of the main army was such, that none of the known enemies of the commander-in-chief dared to show themselves in the camp. The contemptible Conway was obliged to resign his commission; and afterwards having fought a duel with General Cadwallader, and thinking himself mortally wounded, he addressed the following letter to General Washington:—

"I find myself just able to hold the pen during a few minutes, and take this opportunity to express my sincere grief for having done, written, or said anything disagreeable to your excellency. My career will soon be over; therefore justice and truth prompt me to declare my last sentiments. You are in my eyes the great and good man. May you long enjoy the love, veneration, and esteem of these States whose liberties you have assisted by your virtues!"

Thus were the bitterest enemies of this incomparable man compelled to prove "how awful goodness is,"—to fall abashed before the majesty of innocence, and to verify by their defeat the eloquent remark of one* of his greatest admirers, that "distinguished merit will ever rise superior to

* Robert Hall.

oppression, and will draw lustre from reproach. The vapours which gather round the rising sun, and follow him in his course, seldom fail at the close of it to form a magnificent theatre for his reception, and to invest with variegated tints and with a softened effulgence the luminary which they cannot hide."

CHAPTER XXI.

Complaints of the Pennsylvanians against the Commander-in-Chief—His Justification in a letter to Congress—Improvements in the Regulations of the Army—Overtures of the British Government—Evacuation of Philadelphia—Battle of Monmouth.

BESIDES those plots which arose out of selfish jealousy and personal pique, General Washington had to contend against the irritated feelings of the Pennsylvanians, whose sufferings in consequence of the occupation of their capital by the enemy led them to remonstrate with Congress in a memorial which contained the most indiscriminating reflections on the commander-in-chief. This conduct induced Washington to lay open to Congress at once, and with the utmost boldness, such of those causes conducing to the failure of his efforts as were chargeable upon them. The representations which his letter contains respecting the state of the army, and which would be incredible were not their truth established by his signature, deserve a notice in this place.

“Full as I was,” he writes, “in my letter of yesterday, of the matter in the commissary department, fresh and more powerful reasons oblige me to add that I am now convinced beyond a doubt, that unless some great and capital change suddenly takes place in that line this army must inevitably be reduced to one or the other of these three

things ; to starve, dissolve, or disperse in order to obtain subsistence. Rest assured, Sir, that this is not an exaggerated picture, and that I have abundant reason to suppose what I say.

“ Saturday afternoon receiving information that the enemy in force had left the city, and were advancing towards Derby with apparent design to forage, and draw subsistence from that part of the country, I ordered the troops to be in readiness that I might give every opposition in my power ; when, to my great mortification, I was not only informed, but convinced, that the men were unable to stir on account of a want of provisions, and that a dangerous mutiny, begun the night before, and which with difficulty was suppressed by the spirited exertions of some officers, was still much to be apprehended from the want of this article.

“ This brought forth the only commissary in the purchasing line in this camp, and with him the melancholy and alarming truth, that he had not a hoof of any kind to slaughter, and not more than twenty-five barrels of flour ! From hence form an opinion of our situation, when I add that he could not tell when to expect any.

“ All I could do under these circumstances was to send out a few light parties to watch and harass the enemy, whilst other parties were instantly detached different ways to collect, if possible, as much provision as would satisfy the present pressing wants of the soldiery—but will this answer ? No, Sir, three or four days of bad weather would prove our destruction. What then is to become of the army this winter ? And if we are now as often without provisions as with them what is to become of us in the spring, when our force will be

collected with the aid, perhaps, of militia, to take advantage of an early campaign before the enemy can be reinforced? These are considerations of great magnitude, meriting the closest attention, and will, when my own reputation is so intimately connected with and to be affected by the event, justify my saying that the present commissaries are by no means equal to the execution of their office, or that the disaffection of the people is past all belief. This misfortune, however, does in my opinion proceed from both causes, and though I have been tender heretofore in giving any opinion, or of lodging complaints, as the change in that department took place contrary to my judgment, and the consequences thereof were predicted; yet finding that the inactivity of the army, whether from want of provisions, clothes, or other essentials, is charged to my account, not only by the common vulgar, but by those in power, it is time for me to speak plain in exculpation of myself. With truth then I can declare, that no man, in my opinion, ever had his measures more impeded than I have by every department of the army. Since the month of July we have had no assistance from the quartermaster-general; and to want of assistance from this department the commissary-general charges great part of his deficiency. To this I am to add, that notwithstanding it is a standing order (and often repeated), that the troops shall always have two days' provision by them, that they might be ready at any sudden call; yet scarcely any opportunity has offered of taking advantage of the enemy, that has not been either totally obstructed or greatly impeded on this account. And this, the great and crying evil is not

all; soap, vinegar, and other articles allowed by Congress, we see none of, nor have we seen them, I believe, since the battle of Brandywine. The first indeed we have now little occasion for, few men having more than one shirt, many only the moiety of one, and some none at all. In addition to which, as a proof of the little benefit from a clothier-general, and at the same time, as a further proof of the inability of an army under the circumstances of this to perform the common duties of soldiers, besides a number of men confined to hospitals for want of shoes, and others in farmers' houses on the same account, we have, by a field return this day made, no less than two thousand eight hundred and ninety-eight now in camp unfit for duty, because they are barefoot and otherwise naked. By the same return it appears that our whole strength in continental troops (including the eastern brigades, which have joined us since the surrender of General Burgoyne), exclusive of the Maryland troops sent to Wilmington, amounts to no more than eight thousand two hundred in camp fit for duty; notwithstanding which, and that since the fourth instant, our number fit for duty, from the hardships and exposure they have undergone, particularly from the want of blankets, have decreased near two thousand men; we find, gentlemen, without knowing whether the army was really going into winter quarters or not (for I am sure no resolution of mine would warrant the remonstrance), reprobating the measure as much as if they thought the soldiers were made of stocks and stones, and equally insensible of frost and snow; and moreover, as if they conceived it easily practicable for an inferior army, under the disad-

vantages I have described ours to be, which are by no means exaggerated, to confine a superior one, in all respects well appointed and provided for a winter's campaign, within the city of Philadelphia, and to cover from depradative waste the states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, &c. But what makes this matter more extraordinary in my eyes is, that these very gentlemen, who were well apprised of the nakedness of the troops from ocular demonstration—who thought their own soldiers worse clad than ours, and advised me, near a month ago, to postpone the execution of a plan I was about to adopt in consequence of a resolve of Congress for seizing clothes, under strong assurances that an ample supply would be collected in ten days, agreeably to a decree of the state, not one article of which, by the bye, is yet come to hand—should think a winter's campaign, and the covering these states from the invasion of an enemy, so easy and practicable a business. I can assure those gentlemen, that it is a much easier and less distressing thing to frame remonstrances in a comfortable room by a good fire-side, than to occupy a cold bleak hill, and sleep under frost and snow, without clothes or blankets. However, although they seem to have little feeling for the naked and distressed soldiers, I feel superabundantly for them, and from my soul pity those miseries which it is not in my power to relieve or prevent."

During the winter that followed, the army was subject to almost unexampled sufferings. At one time no fewer than three thousand nine hundred and eighty-nine were unfit for duty from nakedness; while at another the whole army was destitute of animal food for nine days. Nothing but

the commanding influence of General Washington could have prevented universal mutiny and desertion; and nothing but the entire ignorance in which the enemy was kept respecting their condition, can account for the delay of hostile measures, by which the American force was saved from utter destruction.

The serious difficulties which obstructed the renovation of the army for the ensuing campaign, impressed the mind of General Washington with the deepest anxiety. His representations to Congress on the subject were constant and urgent, and they at length succeeded so far as to procure the appointment of a committee of that body to repair to head quarters, and to report upon the steps necessary to be taken. This committee conducted their inquiry in January, 1778, and returned to Congress deeply sensible of the reasonableness of the general's suggestions. The division of power and responsibility, which had hitherto obtained in every department, was remedied. General Green was appointed quartermaster-general, and Colonel Wadsworth commissary-general. Some other improvements were also made at the suggestion of General Washington, which greatly increased the comforts, and facilitated the future movements of the army.

Meanwhile, negotiations had been conducted between the American Congress and the Court of France, with so much sagacity and political skill, as to secure the alliance of that important power. This union rendered Philadelphia by no means a desirable station for the British forces. This the hostile government were not slow to perceive.

But before they took measures accordingly, some events, highly interesting as indicating the progress of opinion in England, transpired in the House of Commons, which deserve a brief notice in this place.

On the 17th of February, 1778, Lord North, to the astonishment of the nation, brought forward a measure of conciliation with America. He introduced it with a long and ingenious speech, the object of which was to convince the House, in spite of their memory and their common sense, that his proposals were very consistent with his well-known and long-entertained opinions. It appeared, however, too evidently, that nothing but the miscarriage which had necessarily flowed from his narrow and mischievous policy, had originated the propositions he submitted.

A dull and melancholy silence* succeeded his address. It was heard throughout with profound attention, but without a single mark of approbation from any description of men, or from any individual in the house. Astonishment, dejection and fear overclouded the whole assembly, and it was generally concluded that something had transpired even more calamitous than had been made public, which could produce such an abrupt and unparalleled change in all the measures, principles and arguments of that misguided minister.

Mr. Fox immediately succeeded his lordship in the debate. He complimented the minister on his conversion, and congratulated his own party on the acquisition of so potent an auxiliary. He was glad to find that his propositions did not materially differ

* Annual Register.

from those laid before them by his friend Mr. Burke three years before ; and reminded the house that although they were then rejected by the minister, three years' war had convinced him of their utility. He observed that the noble lord was so perfect a proselyte that the very same arguments which had at that time been so ineffectually used by the minority, and in nearly the same words, were now adopted by his lordship. He ironically applauded his resolution in relinquishing the right of taxation, from the high satisfaction which it must afford to several country gentlemen who had placed so firm a reliance on his former declarations. Nor was he less pleased with the power to be given to the Commissioners for restoring the charter of Massachussets, as that was a proof of his lordship's wisdom in framing the act by which it was destroyed. For to do and to undo, to destroy and to restore, were not only the singular prerogative and high felicity of power, but they were also the most exalted acts of wisdom. He wished this concession had been made more early and on principles more respectful to parliament. To tell them that if they were deceived they had deceived themselves, was neither kind nor civil to an assembly, which for so many years had relied upon the noble lord with such unreserved confidence. That all public bodies like the House of Commons must give a large confidence to persons in office, and the only method of preventing the abuse of that confidence was, to punish those who had misinformed them concerning the true state of their affairs, or conducted them with negligence, ignorance or incapacity. That the noble lord's argument, upon

this subject might be all collected into one point, his excuses all reduced to an apology,—his total ignorance. The noble lord hoped, and was disappointed. He expected a great deal, and found little to answer his expectations. He thought America would have submitted to his laws, and she resisted them. He thought they would have submitted to his armies, and they were beaten by inferior numbers. He made conciliatory propositions, and he thought they would succeed, but they were rejected. He appointed Commissioners to make peace, and he thought they had power, but he found that they could not make peace, and that nobody believed they had any powers. That he had said many such things as he had thought fit in his conciliatory proposition, he thought it a proper mode of quieting the Americans on the affair of taxation. If any gentleman would give himself the trouble of reading that proposition, he would find not one word of it corresponding to the representation made of it by its framer. That the short account of it was, that the noble lord in that proposition assured the colonies, that when parliament had taxed them as much as they thought proper, they would tax them no more. He would vote for the present proposition, because it was much more clear and satisfactory; for necessity had forced the noble lord to speak plainly.

But if the concession should be found ample enough, and should be found to come too late, what punishment would be sufficient for those who adjourned parliament in order to make a proposition of concession, and then had neglected to do it until France had concluded a treaty with the inde-

pendent states of America? He said he could answer with certainty for the truth of his information; it was no light matter, and came from no contemptible authority. He therefore wished that the ministry would give the house satisfaction on this interesting point. Whether they knew anything of this treaty, and whether they had not been informed previously to the making of their proposition, of a treaty, which would make the proposition as useless to the peace as it was humiliating to the dignity of Great Britain.

These measures dwindled at length into the following meagre resolutions, which were agreed to without a division.

“I. That leave be given to bring in a bill to enable his Majesty *to appoint Commissioners to meet, consult and agree upon the means of quieting the provinces of North America.*

“II. That leave be given to bring in a bill for *declaring the intentions of parliament concerning the exercise of the right of imposing taxes within his Majesty's Colonies, &c., of North America.*”

While these impotent measures were agitating the British Senate, more important events were transpiring in America. Before the campaign opened Sir William Howe resigned the command of the invading army, and Sir Henry Clinton, together with his Commission to supersede him as Commander-in-Chief, received orders to evacuate Philadelphia. In anticipation of his progress through New Jersey, Washington immediately detached a part of his forces to obstruct his progress and annoy him on his march. A council of war decided against a general engagement with the British army, and Washington accordingly kept

upon the heights of New Jersey, and held himself ready to make an attack as soon as circumstances should appear to justify it. On the 25th of June, that opportunity appeared to him to offer; a council of war gave their opinions against a general engagement, but in this instance Washington, with that unwavering reliance on his own judgment which is a capital distinction of the decided mind, resolved to reject their advice. The results of this decision will be best learned from his own letter to Congress.

“Englishtown, July 1, 1778.

“SIR,

“I EMBRACE this first moment of leisure to give Congress a more full and particular account of the movements of the army under my command since its passing the Delaware, than the situation of our affairs would heretofore permit.

“I had the honour to advise them, that, on the appearances of the enemy's intentions to march through Jersey becoming serious, I had detached General Maxwell's brigade in conjunction with the militia of that state to interrupt and impede their progress by every obstruction in their power, so as to give time to the army under my command to come up with them, and take advantage of any favourable circumstances that might present themselves. The army having proceeded to Coryel's ferry, and crossed the Delaware at that place, I immediately detached Colonel Morgan with a select corps of six hundred men to reinforce General Maxwell, and marched with the main body towards Princeton.

“The slow advance of the enemy had greatly

the air of design, and led me, with others, to suspect that General Clinton, desirous of a general action, was endeavouring to draw us down into the lower country, in order, by a rapid movement, to gain our right, and take possession of the strong grounds above us. This consideration, and to give the troops time to repose and refresh themselves from the fatigues they had experienced from rainy and excessive hot weather, determined me to halt at Hopewell township about five miles from Princeton, where we remained till the morning of the twenty-fifth.

“ On the preceding day I made a second detachment of fifteen hundred chosen troops under brigadier-general Scott, to reinforce those already in the vicinity of the enemy, the more effectually to annoy and delay their march. The next day the army moved to Kingston; and, having received intelligence that the enemy were prosecuting their route towards Monmouth court-house, I despatched a thousand select men under Brigadier-general Wayne, and sent the Marquis de Lafayette to take the command of the whole advanced corps, including Maxwell's brigade and Morgan's light infantry, with orders to take the first fair opportunity of attacking the enemy's rear.

“ In the evening of the same day, the whole army marched from Kingston, where our baggage was left, with intention to preserve a proper distance for supporting the advanced corps, and arrived at Cranberry early the next morning. The intense heat of the weather, and a heavy storm unluckily coming on, made it impossible to resume our march that day without great inconvenience and injury to the troops. Our advanced corps,

being differently circumstanced, moved from the position it had held the night before, and took post in the evening on the Monmouth road about five miles from the enemy's rear, in expectation of attacking them next morning on their march.—The main body having remained at Cranberry, the advanced corps was found to be too remote, and too far upon the right, to be supported in case of an attack either upon or from the enemy; which induced me to send orders to the marquis to file off by his left towards Englishtown, which he accordingly executed early in the morning of the twenty-seventh.

“The enemy, in marching from Allentown, had changed their disposition, and placed their best troops in the rear, consisting of all the grenadiers, light infantry, and chasseurs of the line. This alteration made it necessary to increase the number of our advanced corps; in consequence of which, I detached Major-general Lee with two brigades to join the marquis at Englishtown, on whom of course the command of the whole devolved, amounting to about five thousand men.—The main body marched the same day, and encamped within three miles of that place. Morgan's corps was left hovering on the enemy's right flank; and the Jersey militia, amounting at this time to about seven or eight hundred men, under General Dickinson, on their left.

“The enemy were now encamped in a strong position, with their right extending about a mile and a half beyond the court-house in the parting of the roads leading to Shrewsbury and Middletown, and their left along the road from Allentown to Monmouth, about three miles on this side the

court-house. Their right flank lay on the skirt of a small wood, while their left was secured by a very thick one,—a morass running towards their rear, and their whole front covered by a wood, and, for a considerable extent towards the left, with a morass.—In this situation they halted till the morning of the twenty-eighth.

“Matters being thus situated,—and having had the best information, that, if the enemy were once arrived at the heights of Middletown, ten or twelve miles from where they were, it would be impossible to attempt anything against them with a prospect of success,—I determined to attack their rear the moment they should get in motion from their present ground. I communicated my intention to General Lee, and ordered him to make his disposition for the attack, and to keep his troops constantly lying upon their arms, to be in readiness at the shortest notice.—This was done with respect to the troops under my immediate command.

“About five in the morning, General Dickinson sent an express informing me that the front of the enemy had begun their march. I instantly put the army in motion, and sent orders by one of my aides to General Lee to move on and attack them, unless there should be very powerful reasons to the contrary,—acquainting him at the same time, that I was marching to support him, and, for doing it with the greater expedition and convenience, should make the men disencumber themselves of their packs and blankets.

“After marching about five miles, to my great surprise and mortification, I met the whole advanced corps retreating,—and, as I was told, by General Lee’s orders,—without having made any

opposition, except one fire, given by a party under the command of Colonel Butler, on their being charged by the enemy's cavalry, who were repulsed. —I proceeded immediately to the rear of the corps, which I found closely pressed by the enemy, and gave directions for forming part of the retreating troops, who, by the brave and spirited conduct of the officers, aided by some pieces of well-served artillery, checked the enemy's advance, and gave time to make a disposition of the left wing and second line of the army upon an eminence, and in a wood a little in the rear, covered by a morass in front. On this were placed some batteries of cannon by Lord Stirling, who commanded the left wing, which played upon the enemy with great effect, and, seconded by parties of infantry detached to oppose them, effectually put a stop to their advance.

“ General Lee being detached with the advanced corps, the command of the right wing, for the occasion, was given to General Green. For the expedition of the march, and to counteract any attempt to turn our right, I had ordered him to file off by the new church, two miles from English-town, and fall into the Monmouth road, a small distance in the rear of the court-house, while the rest of the column moved directly on towards the court-house.—On intelligence of the retreat, he marched up and took a very advantageous position on the right.

“ The enemy, by this time, finding themselves warmly opposed in front, made an attempt to turn our left flank : but they were bravely repulsed and driven back by detached parties of infantry. They also made a movement to our right with as little

success, General Green having advanced a body of troops with artillery to a commanding piece of ground ; which not only disappointed their design of turning our right, but severely enfiladed those in front of the left wing.—In addition to this, General Wayne advanced with a body of troops, and kept up so severe and well-directed a fire, that the enemy were soon compelled to retire behind the defile where the first stand in the beginning of the action had been made.

“In this situation the enemy had both their flanks secured by thick woods and morasses, while their front could only be approached through a narrow pass. I resolved nevertheless to attack them ; and, for that purpose, ordered General Poor, with his own and the Carolina brigade, to move round upon their right, and General Woodford upon their left, and the artillery to gall them in front. But the impediments in their way prevented their getting within reach before it was dark. They remained upon the ground they had been directed to occupy during the night, with intention to begin the attack early the next morning ; and the army continued lying upon their arms in the field of action, to be in readiness to support them.

“In the mean time the enemy were employed in removing their wounded, and about twelve o'clock at night marched away in such silence, that, though General Poor lay extremely near them, they effected their retreat without his knowledge. They carried off all their wounded, except four officers and about forty privates whose wounds were too dangerous to permit their removal.

“The extreme heat of the weather, the fatigue

of the men from their march through a deep sandy country almost entirely destitute of water, and the distance the enemy had gained by marching in the night, made a pursuit impracticable and fruitless : it would have answered no valuable purpose, and would have been fatal to numbers of our men, several of whom died the preceding day with heat.

“ Were I to conclude my account of this day’s transactions without expressing my obligations to the officers of the army in general, I should do injustice to their merit, and violence to my feelings. They seemed to vie with each other in manifesting their zeal and bravery. The catalogue of those who distinguished themselves is too long to admit of particularising individuals. I cannot, however, forbear mentioning Brigadier-general Wayne, whose good conduct and bravery through the whole action deserves particular commendation.

“ The behaviour of the troops in general, after they recovered from the first surprise occasioned by the retreat of the advanced corps, was such as could not be surpassed.—All the artillery, both officers and men, that were engaged, distinguished themselves in a remarkable manner.

“ Inclosed, Congress will be pleased to receive a return of our killed, wounded, and missing. Among the first were Lieutenant-colonel Bunner of Pennsylvania, and Major Dickinson of Virginia, both officers of distinguished merit, and much to be regretted.—The enemy’s slain, left on the field, and buried by us, according to the return of the persons assigned to that duty, were four officers and two hundred and forty-five privates. In the former number was the honourable Colonel Monckton. Exclusive of these, they buried some

themselves, as there were several new graves near the field of battle.—How many men they may have had wounded, cannot be determined: but, from the usual proportion, the number must have been considerable.—There were a few prisoners taken.

“The peculiar situation of General Lee at this time requires that I should say nothing of his conduct. He is now in arrest. The charges against him, with such sentence as the court-martial may decree in his case, shall be transmitted for the approbation or disapprobation of Congress, as soon as it shall be passed.

“Being fully convinced by the gentlemen of this country that the enemy cannot be hurt or injured in their embarkation at Sandy-Hook, the place to which they are going,—and unwilling to get too far removed from the North River,—I put the troops in motion early this morning, and shall proceed that way, leaving the Jersey brigade, Morgan’s corps, and other light parties (the militia being all dismissed), to hover about them, to countenance desertion, and to prevent their depredations as far as possible. After they embark, the former will take post in the neighbourhood of Elizabeth-town, the latter rejoin the corps from which they were detached.—

“I have the honour to be, &c.

“GEORGE WASHINGTON.”

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